DISCOVER *the* WORLD *through* MUSIC

SONGLINES

25 *Years*

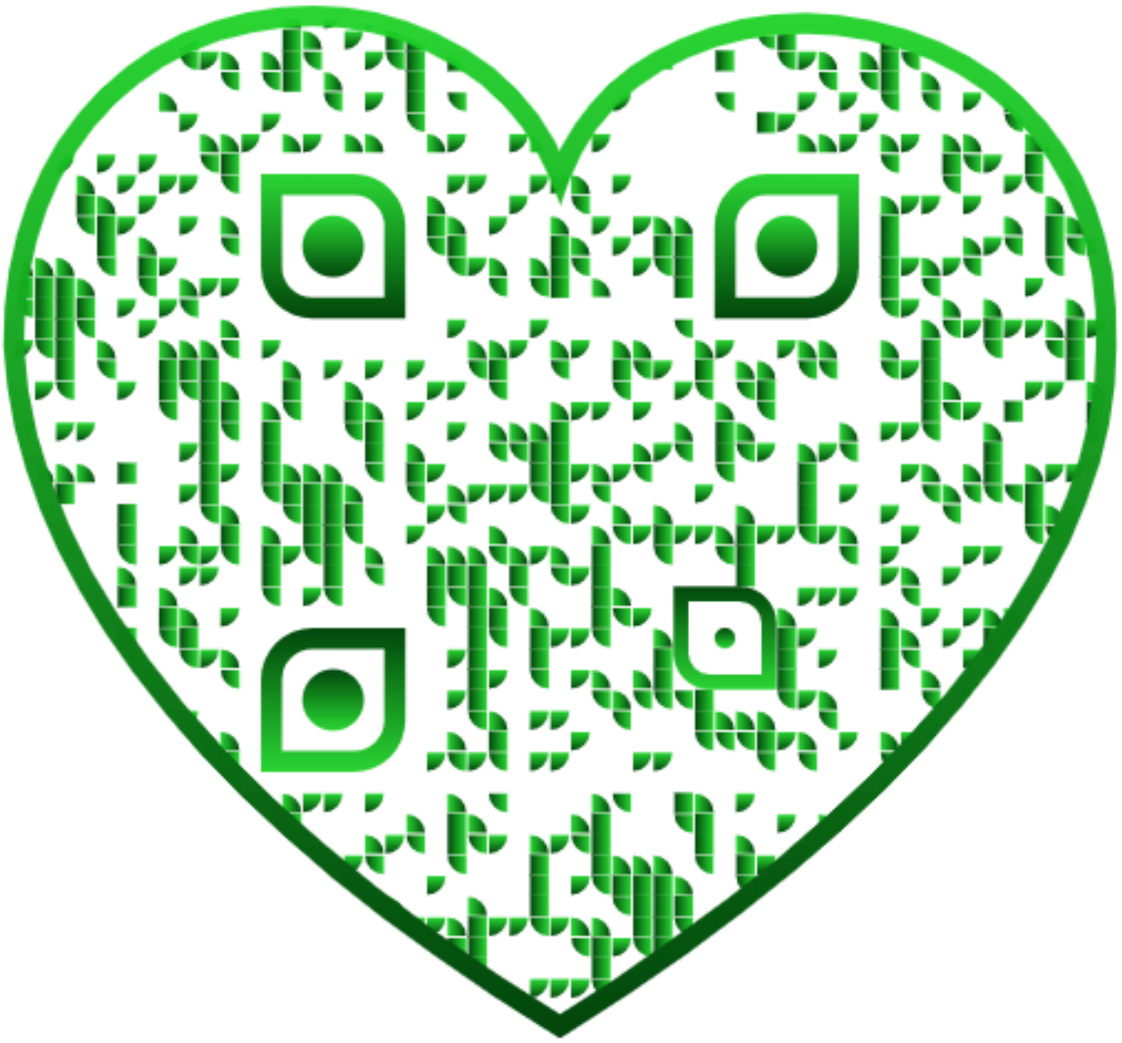
of Songlines

STARRING...

ORCHESTRA BAOBAB • LHASA • TARAF DE HAÏDOUKS
GAYE SU AKYOL • SOUAD MASSI • TINARIWEN • SPELL SONGS
ALI FARKA TOURÉ & TOUMANI DIABATÉ • THE GLOAMING
ONDATRÓPICA • QAWWALI FLAMENCO • MARIZA
AND MUCH MORE

PLUS
LES AMAZONES D'AFRIQUE • SONA JOBARTEH & TAJ MAHAL
SHANE MACGOWAN • JUSTIN ADAMS

ISSUE 195
MAR 2024
songlines.co.uk
facebook.com/songlines



BABEL MUSIC XP

28 • 29 • 30 mars

DOCK DES SUDS - FRICHE LA BELLE DE MAI

2024

MUSIC | EXPO | CONFERENCES

Marseille France

WWW.BABELMUSICXP.COM

DESIGN > JOAN > ONOFRIFE.COM

SONGLINES

Founding Editor
Simon Broughton
Publisher
James Anderson-Hanney
Editor
Russ Slater Johnson
Assistant Editor
Emma Rycroft
Art Director
Juliet Boucher
Online Content Editor
James McCarthy
Listings Editor
Tatiana Rucinska
Assisted this issue by
Spencer Grady
Marketing Manager
John Barnett
Marketing Assistant
Oscar Faulkner
Cover Image
René Goiffon
Contributing Editors
Jane Cornwell, Mark Ellingham & Nigel Williamson
Subscriptions Director
Sally Boettcher
Editorial Director
Martin Cullingford
Managing Director
Ravi Chandiramani
Publishing Director
Tom Curtiss
CEO **Ben Allen**
Chairman **Mark Allen**

SUBSCRIPTIONS
UK: 0800 137 201
Overseas: +44 (0)1722 716997
subscriptions@markallengroup.com

ADVERTISING
+44 (0)20 7501 6683
james@songlines.co.uk

MA Music Leisure & Travel
Part of
Mark Allen
www.markallengroup.com

Songlines is published by
MA Music Leisure & Travel Ltd
St Jude's Church, Dulwich Rd,
London, SE24 0PB, UK
+44 (0)20 7738 5454
info@songlines.co.uk
songlines.co.uk

© MA Music Leisure & Travel Ltd, 2023. All rights reserved. No part of *Songlines* may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without prior written permission of the publishing director.
The views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the editor or *Songlines* advertisements in the journal do not imply endorsement of the products or services advertised. Please read our privacy policy, by visiting privacypolicy.markallengroup.com. This will explain how we process, use and safeguard your data.

ISSN 1464-8113.
Printed by Pensord Press Ltd, Dowlais, CF48 3TD
Record trade distribution Songlines 020 7738 5454
Newstrade distribution Marketforce 020 3787 9101

recycle
When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.

25 and counting...

It's been a humbling experience putting together this special 25th anniversary issue of *Songlines*. Humbling, because of the realisation of not being alone. As someone who has spent a large chunk of their life researching obscure Colombian bandleaders from the 1950s, even more obscure Uruguayan guitarists from the 1960s, and countless small labels and local musicians everywhere from São Paulo to the heights of the Peruvian Andes, and finding very few people who share those precise interests, it's wonderful to find that I'm part of a community.

The idea behind the feature to celebrate our anniversary was simple: to find 25 stories, one from every year of *Songlines*' life. The hard part was choosing which stories to focus on. Over the past months I've been speaking to contributors and digging through our archives to find stories that needed retelling. I hope you agree that it's a good selection. I certainly feel like it's a great advert for what *Songlines* does. Ultimately, we're a magazine about music and people, regardless of geography, race, gender, class or any other broad description you may want to throw at someone.

In total, 47 writers contributed to this issue, and putting it together I realised how passionate they all are about music and people, and how lucky I am to get to work with them all. To our contributors therefore I would like to say a huge thank you for all your efforts, in this issue, and prior, a thought I'm sure former editors of the magazine concur with. Thanks also to all the photographers, artists, record labels, PRs and the production team at *Songlines* for their continued support. We couldn't do it without you! Also, special thanks this issue to René Goiffon whose photo of the Tartit Ensemble from 2003's Festival au Desert in Mali adorns the cover. "The most amazing festival I ever attended," René recalls.

One of the things that struck me while reading our '25 Years of *Songlines*' feature (pages 28-47) was the generational nature of music, how each new generation has their own take on traditions, and how it's always a balance between paying respect and creating something new. It's there with Ondatrópica, Warsaw Village Band, Gaye Su Akyol, Bellowhead, the Garifuna Collective, Abel Selaocoe and classical music's new class, and now with the many Irish artists who became a fixture of this magazine in 2023. It will continue no doubt, and we will continue trying to capture the magic when it does.

Russ Slater Johnson, Editor

P.S. We have important news relating to our covermount CD, see page 10 to get the lowdown.

CONTRIBUTORS THIS ISSUE INCLUDE

Jo Frost
Former *Songlines* editor, Jo is now enjoying life as a freelance journalist. This issue she grooves to the olllam (p20), checks out a new Sam Lee doc (p11) and harks back to Bellowhead (p36) and Spell Songs (p43)

Martin Longley
Marty started writing for *Songlines* in 2001, and also pens for sister journal *Jazzwise*. He's normally on the road, which is the case this issue where he offers a dispatch from Belgrade's noisy innards (p87)

Fiona Talkington
A BBC radio presenter, including 20 years with the award-winning *Late Junction*, Fiona is also a curator who works extensively with Nordic music. She revisits Kimmo Pohjonen's unique charge on p37

Songlines was launched in 1999 and is the definitive magazine for world music – music that has its roots in all parts of the globe, from Mali to Mexico, India to Iraq. Whether this music is defined as traditional, contemporary, folk or fusion, *Songlines* is the only magazine to truly represent and embrace it. However, *Songlines* is not just about music, but about how the music fits into the landscape; it's about politics, history and identity. Delivered in both print and digital formats, *Songlines*, through its extensive articles and reviews, is your essential and independent guide to a world of music and culture, whether you are starting on your journey of discovery or are already a seasoned fan.

@SonglinesMag facebook.com/songlines instagram.com/songlinesmag songlines.co.uk

Want the CD that goes with this issue?

Subscribe from the next issue and we'll also send you our March CD

Simply use code **MARCHCD** at the checkout

magsubscriptions.com/music-songlines

+44 (0) 1722 716 997 subscriptions@markallengroup.com

31 Orchestra Baobab's surprise 2002 reunion

Toure Behan

20 the olllam

Zé Bateira

48 Les Amazones d'Afrique

Karen Paulina Biswell

UPFRONT

06 Top of the World

08 The Source
Sona Jobarteh & Taj Mahal, Sam Lee, Shane MacGowan, Festival of Kurdistan, Catriona Price, Aron & the Jeri Jeri Band, The Music Room

19 Introducing
Gabba

20 Take Note
the olllam

22 Spotlight
Syriana

24 Simon Says

25 Letters

26 Obituaries

FEATURES

28 **25 Years of *Songlines***

48 **Les Amazones d'Afrique**

Dalla Porta

REVIEWS

52 Africa

56 Americas

64 Europe

72 Fusion

78 Asia

79 Pacific

80 Classical & Jazz

REGULARS

82 My World
Mariza

84 Beginner's Guide
Justin Adams

87 Dispatch from
Belgrade, Serbia

88 Gig Guide

92 Festival Guide

95 **Eliza Carthy**'s
News of the Whirl

97 Fireside Stories
Songlines

98 Essential 10
Music Books

"I like drones, grooves... and a little bit of grit. I don't like things too flashy"

Read about virtuoso guitarist Justin Adams' far-reaching and prolific career in our Beginner's Guide, p84

TOP OF THE WORLD

On this issue's compilation – the perfect selection of new music and bonus tracks from across the globe

TOP OF THE WORLD TRACKS

01

01 **Les Amazones d'Afrique** 'Musow Danse (Women's Dance)'

From *Musow Danse* on Real World Records

Deep bass, supersonic synth and funk melodies dance with Les Amazones' joyful, empowering voices. **See p52**

06

06 **Lagos Thugs** 'Innocent Blood'

From *Chaos* on Immensum Music

A heady dose of Afrobeat. Grooving guitar, blazing brass and warm chorus carry the brilliance while astute lyrics demand accountability for violence against Lagos protestors on 20/20/2020. **See p53**

02

02 **El Gato Negro** 'Mamie Wata (feat Pat Kalla)'

From *Tigre Qui Pleure* on X Ray Production / Que Buen Momento

El Gato and Kalla's silky vocals intertwine over a groove-saturated, *bossa*-meets-bass background. You'll be singing along by the second chorus. **See p73**

07

07 **Spell Songs** 'Birds of the Blizzard (Live)'

From *Gifts of Light* on Hudson Records

Performed at Birmingham Symphony Hall by the supergroup, Julie Fowlis leads the calm and delicate paean to nature that holds its audience captive. **See p69**

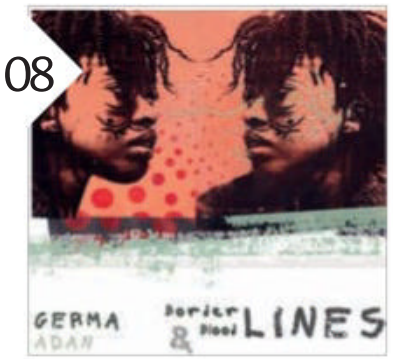
03

03 **YĪN YĪN** 'Tam Tam'

From *Mount Matsu* on Glitterbeat Records

East Asian landscapes, a healthy dose of surf guitar and a cheeky sensibility mark out this delightful, finely constructed instrumental from the Dutch group's third album. **See p75**

08



08 **Germa Adan** 'Singing Queen'

From *Borderlines & Bloodlines* on Binding Thread Records

Looping guitar riffs hypnotise beneath the gentle, poignant voice of Haitian-born Adan, singing from Pierre-Richard Narcisse's poem 'Renn Chantrel' in Haitian Creole. **See p56**

04

04 **La Muchacha & El Propio Junte** 'El Ofendía'

From *Los Ombligos* on Sello In-Correcto

La Muchacha's gritty, forceful voice matches marching, driving percussion in a hammer blow track that runs away from you just as you think you've grasped it. **See p61**

09

09 **Dina Ögon** 'Milton'

From *Orion* on Playground Music

Float away on this groove-filled, cool-as-a-cucumber slice of Scandi soul. Anna Ahnlund's airy Joni Mitchell-esque voice gives the light 1970s pop feel you didn't know this music needed. **See p65**

05

05 **ØXN** 'The Wife of Michael Cleary'

From *CYRM* on Claddagh Records

Michael Cleary accuses his wife of being a fairy and she is killed: Radie Peat's startling voice helms the atmospheric, eerie telling of this unsettling story. **See p66**

10

10 **Amaro Freitas** 'Y'Y'

From *Y'Y* on Psychic Hotline

Inspired by time in the Amazon basin, Freitas melds ritualistic vocals, Shabaka Hutchings' scintillating, breathy pipe playing and traditional rhythms with his own virtuosic jazz piano. **See p58**

+ BONUS TRACKS

11 **Souad Massi**
'Yawlidi'
From *Deb* on Sony / Virgin Music France

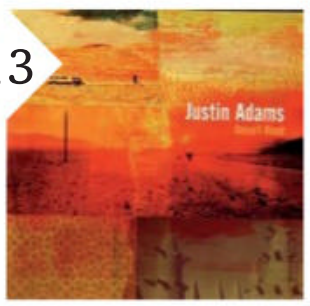
BUY NOW

From the album that put Massi on the map: a joyous, infectious chorus and rhythm encourage 'My Boy' to grow up strong, proud and street smart. **See p31**

12 **Ondatrópica**
'Papi Shingaling'
From *Ondatrópica (Deluxe Version)* on Soundway Records

BUY NOW

The boogaloo bounces as roving bass and fiery horns fronted by Michi Sarmiento's alto sax battle it out with Markitos Mikolta's sweet tones, while Chilean rapper Ana Tijoux makes a surprise cameo. **See p38**



13 **Justin Adams**
'Hummingbird'
From *Desert Road* on Wayward Records

BUY NOW

The ubiquitous guitarist winds his way through boundary-crossing desert blues with his usual brilliance and virtuosity. A treasure. **See p84**

14 **Warsaw Village Band**
'Misery Masovian Blues'
From *Sun Celebration* on Karrot Kommando

BUY NOW

An enchanting swirl of modern invention and Polish tradition. Melt into the meld of eerie voices, regimented rhythm, Michał Zaborski's dramatic viola playing and a healthy dollop of brass. **See p40**

15 **The Gloaming**
'Samhradh Samhradh'
From *The Gloaming* on Real World Records

BUY NOW

Originally from the 1700s comes this herald of summer, with Iarla Ó Lionáird's delicate vocals leading alongside Martin Hayes' poignant fiddle. **See p39**

16 **Taraf de Haïdouks**
'Carolina (feat Kočani Orkestar)'
From *Band of Gypsies* on Crammed Discs

BUY NOW

Taken from their legendary 2000 concert in Bucharest, the Roma Gypsy kings burst with energy on an ecstatic frenzy of soaring voices, running percussion and Balkan brass. **See p29**

Miguel Santos

"In all my records since the beginning, there has always been at least one song of Amália [Rodrigues]. It's like saying thank you to her… She was the first person who took *fado* abroad"

Turn to p82 for an interview with fado legend, Mariza, whose career has run the length of Songlines' existence

Free album download on page 52

Taj Mahal

Troubadours in Tandem

Blues and griot traditions unite as Taj Mahal and Sona Jobarteh announce a joint US tour. Turns out they have a lot in common…

Like so often, it all began with a phone call. 25 years after Taj Mahal recorded his Grammy-winning album *Kulanjan* with *kora* maestro Toumani Diabaté (featured in *Songlines* Summer/Autumn 1999, #3), the legendary bluesman dialled up Folklore Productions' Mitch Greenhill in mid-2023 and suggested bringing together his blues with the modern Mande kora-playing of Diabaté's cousin Sona Jobarteh.
"I've been following Sona's concerts on the internet for the last three to four years," he explains from his current base in Hawaii. "She's been developing the kora repertoire beautifully, moving tradition forward and I picked up on that immediately. You know, koras are very fragile instruments, but she's changed the tuning pegs with tight bands around the neck, tuning it perfectly, and that fascinated me. Then, there's that beautiful voice of hers. So, it just made sense to me to suggest concerts together."
It didn't take long for the Anglo-Gambian musician to agree when Greenhill mooted a possible US tour in February-March 2024, which has mushroomed to 16 concerts in North America.
"Exploring the overlaps between Taj Mahal's blues and my Manding kora repertoire is the most interesting part of this project," says Sona. "I can confidently say something is going to blossom that I haven't quite anticipated yet, but I'm quite sure it will celebrate our mutual roots."

Sona Jobarteh plucks out her words with the same virtuosity and intensity that she uses to finger-pick the 21 strings of her kora. We exchange at length in central Paris the day after her sold-out December concert at the capital's mythical La Cigale. Her answers reflect her approach to a music career she has meticulously constructed since her first stage appearance at London's Jazz Café at the age of five: measured, thoroughly orchestrated and profound.
"My own personal expression as an artist is very real. It isn't a façade, it's something I live every single day. I need to structure my music very tightly. From day one I have been exposed to the blues, as expressed in its continent of origin. The melodic and rhythmical structures are expressed by the ancestors of the blues, by artists like Ali Farka Touré and Afel Bocoum, for example. It's not something new, it's always resonating very profoundly with me, I just want to deepen it. Hence my acceptance of this project with Taj."

At the time of writing, the project remains at a nascent level: "Sona is very particular about how her ranges are tight and precise which I love," says Taj. "We'll be doing two or

Courtesy of Otis Redding Foundatioin

three duets, just my guitar or banjo and her kora, and we'll finish the concert with the whole ensemble. If there's the kind of energy and impetus [to] imagine going beyond and recording something, I'd be delighted." Jobarteh adds: "Just now, we're exploring each other's personalities. I'm really impressed with Taj's involvement with West African Manding music and I've learnt a lot about his connections to my family, specifically with those who are not with us anymore." The 40 year old refers to some of the instrumentalists from her family, one of the five leading kora-playing *griot* communities in West Africa. But Taj's fascination with the instrument goes back much further than his Grammy-winning collaboration with Toumani: "In the 60s, I wanted to learn that finger-picking style as bad as I wanted to breath," he says with a chuckle. "It's that sustained tempo of unmechanised rhythm that fascinated me, it's all over the blues. You know, it's not only the notes they play, it's the spaces they're exploring between them. It's classic Bentonia, Mississippi blues, but this West African kora developed over 800 years, with no help from our corporations, radio stations, satellite, Top 20, none of that." The 81 year old proceeds to give an off-the-cuff lecture on kora luminaries like Alhaji Bai Konte, who made Taj his first-ever kora, and jazzmen such as Eric Bibb, who shared the same passion for the instrument over the decades. His memory is elephantine, as his agent Eric Fermin confides after our 40-minute exchange: "Taj talks about these details as if they were yesterday, not 60 years ago. I'm recording everything because he's a monument to the blues and its links to the Caribbean and Africa."

Sona Jobarteh at WOMAD 2022

Paul Tomlins

The trajectories of Taj Mahal and Sona Jobarteh throw up several uncanny parallels. Both enjoyed parental structures tightly knit around music. Yet, beyond their family circles, both braved certain reticence. "In New England, young men weren't encouraged to play the guitar," says Taj laconically in his trademark growl of a voice. "It was dubbed the starvation box. For some reason, people considered it the preserve of southern musicians with their accents, dialects and ways." Sona, meanwhile, has long put to rest the idea that it was a challenge to be a woman griot artist: "I have a huge resentment being labelled a female kora player. It's making a spectacle out of something that should just be about the music." She has been defending her music independently, surrounded by a tight stable which parallels Taj's own defiance of music corporations. "The music industry is still very conservative," she insists. "The space and freedom has yet to be created. We are paving the way for new artists to be freer. Since 2011, I've generated this new space that never goes away from my identity and roots. It's very important for me to have other musicians join me."

This is where Sona, a linguistic and history major from SOAS, and her Gambia Academy, come into sharp focus, as described to *Songlines* shortly before the release of her last album *Badinyaa Kumoo* (December 2021, #173). The Academy in Brikama, 90 minutes from the capital Banjul, is where she continues to nurture talents like the ones displayed by her 17-year-old son Sidiki. "This is the first time that it is a mother rather than a father in a griot family teaching the son," she says with pride. Since the age of three, Sidiki, a strapping *balafon* player with a winning smile, has been joining ▸

his mother in concerts like the one in Paris. Now, he prepares to launch his own career with fellow musicians nurtured in the Academy. "I started on the *djembé* at four, playing on stage with my mother and grandfather Sanjally Jobarteh," he tells me backstage after the concert. "I just loved the rhythm, percussion. It's the same repertoire as the kora, but I'm still trying to find my sound, bringing the Manding tradition forward, like my mum." Visitors to last summer's Shrewsbury Folk and Shambala festivals already enjoyed Sidiki's explorations: "It was a crazy experience," he says blushing. "I was joined by my cousin Musa Filly and Carllo Yaboy and we enjoyed standing ovations for both concerts. So, we're building on this at the Academy where we're a whole class of balafon players jamming together." Sidiki's development is source of great pride to his mother, but Sona insists on hard work behind his growth: "It's beautiful to see he's flourishing as a person, but it's been a tough journey, in terms of sacrifices I've had to make, to be able to not only guide and support him but continue my own career at the same time. Now, we've arrived at a moment where Sidiki is finding his own space and helping the Gambia Academy through teaching and production. It's wonderful to see."

The growth of this unique musical space on the African continent is strongly encouraged by Taj Mahal: "I spoke to Sona about contributing to her foundation, a fundraising concert or two, helping to develop revenue for the school. It's very, very important, what she's doing for Manding music there." Meanwhile, their tour is already being hailed as a new stepping stone in Taj's glittering 50-plus-year career. As one critic said, he has forged a legend that '*transcend(s) the blues not by leaving them behind, but by revealing their magnificent scope to the world.*'

DANIEL BROWN

Courtesy of Taj Mahal; Rob O'Connor

+ LIVE *Sona Jobarteh and Taj Mahal will be touring the US and Canada from February 22 until March 10*

Where's my covermount CD?

If you bought this issue of *Songlines* from your local newsagent or magazine retailer you may well be asking where the usual CD is. Beginning with this issue, we have made the decision not to include a covermount CD with retail copies of *Songlines*, though please note that all subscribers will continue to receive a CD as per usual. We have not given up on CDs yet, which we know are important to so many of our readers, but we want to improve our environmental impact. Magazines which are not sold at retail are recycled, but unsold CDs are more likely to end up in landfill and we'd rather they go directly to the readers who really want them. For this reason, we are encouraging our readers to subscribe directly to *Songlines*, which will not only ensure less waste, but will also help us generate more income that can be used to make the magazine better than ever for all readers. We hope you will stay with us on this journey as we try to be both climate-conscious and future-proof. For details of subscription packages please visit magsubscriptions.com/music-songlines, email subscriptions@markallengroup.com or call +44(0)1722 716997. For those who have bought this magazine without a CD please use this link to download the compilation digitally: bit.ly/SLTOTW195CD.

THE **GLOBE** AT A **GLANCE**

BRAZIL: a new film from the makers of *Chico & Rita* will be in US theatres from February. *They Shot the Piano Player*, directed by Fernando Trueba and Javier Mariscal, is an animated homage to *bossa nova* narrated by Jeff Goldblum… **COLOMBIA:** a 6.5-metre statue of Shakira has been unveiled along the seafront of Barranquilla, Shakira's hometown. An inscription next to the statue reads: '*Hips that do not lie, a unique talent, a voice that moves masses*'… **GHANA:** Afua Asantewaa Aduonum began singing at midnight on Christmas Eve and didn't stop until December 29. There is hope that her 127 hours stint will get the Guinness World Record for continuous singing, though she won't know until every second of the video footage has been analysed… **IRAN:** Atash, the sole member of heavy metal band KAABOOS, has been ordered to return to his native Iran from Norway. Atash has been in Norway since leaving Iran at 16, and applied for asylum, which the Norwegian government declined. This news came after KAABOOS staged a protest outside the Iranian embassy in Oslo in October last year… **UK:** Universal Music have agreed to buy the entire catalogue of South Asian record label Oriental Star Agencies (OSA), which was set up in Birmingham in the 1960s. The label's roster includes Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Malkit Singh and Bally Sagoo… **URUGUAY:** Spotify has rolled back on its threat to remove its service from Uruguay, where a new copyright bill had been amended to ensure '*fair and equitable remuneration*,' after the company was told that their profits would not be affected by the change… **USA:** Afropop Worldwide have announced details for Camp Afropop, a three-day event celebrating African music globally, and which will include performances and workshops from the likes of Natu Camara, Pedrito Martinez, Jake Blount and Samba Mapangala. The event will take place May 28-31 at Big Indian, New York.

Atash at the Iranian embassy, Oslo

Time to change the record

A new documentary about Sam Lee, part of a climate-focussed exhibition, stresses the need to act before it's too late

Following the announcement that 2023 was the hottest year on record, *Emergence Magazine*'s ten-day-long immersive exhibition at the beginning of December could not have felt more relevant and timely. While the world's media focused on COP28, in London *Shifting Landscapes*' curator and executive magazine editor Emmanuel Vaughan-Lee outlined the aim of the exhibition: to explore the impact of climate change and how we grieve for the changes and losses taking place around us.

Held at the Bargehouse, a former warehouse on the south bank of the Thames, the huge industrial and desolate space lent itself perfectly to the cataclysmic themes on display. Spread across four floors were nine highly contrasting exhibits, among them a large-scale video installation called *Breathing with the Forest* by art collective Marshmallow Laser Feast. Also featured were *Lost World*, an affecting documentary about the destruction being wreaked upon the mangrove forests of Cambodia, caused by the dredging and exportation of sand to Singapore, and *Poisoned Beauty*, a collection of startling images depicting the shocking impact of copper mining in Romania.

Singer and conservationist Sam Lee is the subject of *The Nightingale's Song*, one of the standouts of the exhibition. The documentary's co-director Vaughan-Lee was inspired to make the film after attending one of Lee's magical *Singing with Nightingales* evenings, an annual pilgrimage to highlight the plight of this endangered bird. The film opens with Lee walking through woodland under a full moon, listening attentively for the elusive nightingale. Alongside plenty of footage of Lee immersed in beautiful verdant woodland where he spends a '*charmed few weeks*' every springtime, it also depicts him strolling through Hampstead Heath, the place he'd escape to from school and where, he says, '*nature taught me a lot about how to survive as a kid and where I found my ability to listen deeply*.'

Curiously Lee reveals that it was while he was working as a burlesque dancer that he eventually discovered folk music. Scottish Traveller Stanley Robertson became Lee's mentor and the moment that changed the course of his life was when he realised that '*folk songs act as a map of our emotional and physical understanding of the landscape*.' As Lee greets the nightingale like an old friend, he admits it's incomprehensible to him that he might hear the last nightingale within his lifetime. Despite the undeniable charm and beauty of the film, Lee pulls no punches when revealing some alarming facts about the nightingale (its population has diminished by over 90%) and the state of this country's biodiversity: '*England is one of the most nature-depleted countries in Europe*,' he says.

Lee concludes by saying his '*little campaign to save this bird*' is really a battle against apathy and that he hopes it will '*enable rage and a sense of injustice of what's going on*.' Naturally the film ends with the sound of the nightingale and the overriding sense that it is literally singing for its life.

JO FROST

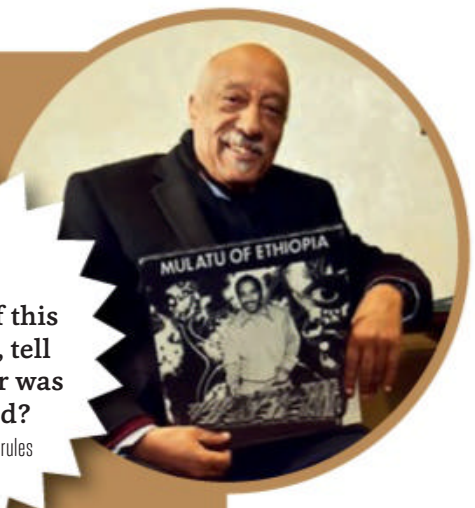
+ MORE *The Nightingale's Song will be available on Emergence Magazine's website in Spring 2024. Sam Lee is releasing a new album, songdreaming, on March 15*

L–R: Marshmallow Laser Feast's installation *Breathing with the Forest*; a still from documentary *Lost World*; Sam Lee searches for nightingales in *The Nightingale's Song*

Marshmallow Laser Feast; Mona Simon; Adam Loften; Alexis Maryon

Via Ethiopian Airlines

Strut Records are set to reissue Mulatu Astatke (pictured)'s landmark 1972 album Mulatu of Ethiopia on coloured vinyl and we have a number of copies to giveaway.



WIN

To win a copy of this seminal record, tell us: in which year was it first released?

See p25 for competition rules

South Asian Sounds

Kaushiki Chakraborty, Sarathy Korwar and Pratibha Singh Baghel are among the names announced for a forthcoming four-day event (March 7-10) at the Southbank Centre showcasing music from the Indian subcontinent. Malkit Singh, *sitar* virtuosos Nishat Khan & Irshad Khan and Jason Singh will also perform as part of the *South Asian Sounds* series.

Quiet Riot

Topic Records, who are celebrating their 85th birthday this year, are set to reissue English folk icon Martin Carthy's self-titled solo debut album on vinyl on February 23. Originally released in 1965 on Fontana Records the album contains classic Carthy cuts 'High Germany' and 'Scarborough Fair' and remains a personal favourite for Carthy.

Field Notes

A new book, *Missing Music: Voices from Where the Dirt Roads End*, by Ian Brennan will detail some of the producer's field-recording trips that have taken him from Suriname to Bostwana, Cambodia and Romania. Brennan's recordings are very familiar to *Songlines'* pages and this is an exciting chance to find out even more about them. *Missing Music* will be published by PM Press on March 5.

Frank Lopez

Brass in Their Pockets

Homeland Brass Band, Florence Nandawula's project in Kampala, Uganda, pays for school fees and music lessons for kids from Katogo Ggaba's slums. The children have played at various events, including the Nyege Nyege Festival. They are raising funds for additional support and shelter.

+ **DONATE** *gofundme.com/f/help-the-kids-of-homeland-brass-band-in-uganda*

IT'S HAPPENING

After sell-out shows across the UK, the London Gospel Afrobeat Choir's **GRACELAND REIMAGINED** continues in Dublin (Feb 6-7), Cork (Feb 8), Bristol (Mar 28) and Liverpool (April 5); those diamond-soled shoes are still dancing... Through The Noise, a platform for a new wave of classical musicians, has announced its 2024 line-up including UK dates for Braimah Kanneh-Mason & Plínio Fernandes, Isata Kanneh-Mason, Seckou Keita, the Abel Selaocoe-fronted Chesaba and an extensive UK and European jaunt from **SIDIKI DEMBÉLÉ & FRIENDS** (March 2-21)... Scottish harpist **ESTHER SWIFT** (June 14) is to turn Edinburgh's Queen's Hall '*into a breathing urban forest*' to mark the release of her debut album *Expectations of a Lifetime*... **AOIFE O'DONOVAN** (June 18) will be performing songs from *All My Friends*, a new album investigating the evolution of women's rights in the US with the help of the Guildhall Session Orchestra at the Barbican... Levellers, Seckou Keita, The Young 'Uns and The Furrow Collective have been announced for **FOLK BY THE OAK** (July 21) in Hertfordshire... **SIDMOUTH FOLK FESTIVAL** (August 2-9) is to celebrate its 70th anniversary with an extra-special line-up that already includes Kate Rusby, Ralph McTell, The Breath, Karine Polwart, Jali Bakary Konteh and many more

HEDONISM

Curently on the Songlines stereo...

Chae Suhyun & VOŁOSI
Minyology pt 3
The Polish quintet collabs with Korean singer Chae Suhyun: dramatic and transportive.

Ispíní na hÉireann
Worse Things Than Dying EP
'The Hardworking Men of Ireland' take a sentimental turn, proving that they can be as heartfelt as they can jovial.

The Cavemen
'Dance Your Dance'
The Nigerian highlife siblings offered up this Christmas treat, and it's a cracker with spiralling guitars, thumping bass and mellifluous vocals.

MÍO 'Det er Meg det Samme Hvor Jeg Havner Når Jeg Dør'
Translating as 'It's All the Same to Me Where I End Up When I Die', this Nordic drinking song gets a punk treatment: chaotic, existential and dance-worthy.

Various Artists
Lembranças Do Nordeste
Toronto's Local Dish label visited Brazil's Natal and Olinda and came back with these recordings of local groups; simple yet mesmerising.

Brigid Mae Power
'Rose Marie'
Taking on a Broadway love song made popular by Slim Whitman, Power uses a slight, nostalgic reverb on her honeyed voice that dances with lyrical devotion.

Beth Madeley

Digging Deeper

Catriona Price reports from Mexico where she has been developing Routes to Roots, a new organisation using intercultural music collaborations to connect communities

Main: Catriona Price (left) recording with El Guapo Music; Left: with Pahua (centre) in Mexico City

REPORT FROM MEXICO

Jannica Honey, Abigail Lichtenstein

Our seven musically mind-expanding weeks in Mexico began in the Central Mexican Highlands. There, I tested out a workshop design I had developed using improvisation to encourage students to explore their own creativity. In building a brand-new piece together, the thoroughly creative and receptive group of young people from the San Miguel de Allende Youth Orchestra expanded my vision of the potential power that workshops like this can have – not only to enable people to draw upon the culture surrounding them in their own music making, but to connect across cultural divides.

We then headed to Xalapa, Veracruz for our first collaboration – with Oaxaca-born folk and jazz singer Coyo Licatzin and the *requinto jarocho* player Diego Huerta. We put our heads and instruments together and wrote a brand-new song called 'Begonia', before filming and recording it in Casa Pulpo (literally a house in the shape of an octopus).

It's so exciting when an idea that's been living in your head for years is suddenly happening. I've been imagining these intercultural creative collaborations for so long, convinced that they would work and yield beautiful connections, but not exactly sure how they would play out in practice. I couldn't have been happier with the start we made.

Back in Mexico City, we met our second collaborator – the electronic, roots-inspired musician, Pahua. We put our track 'Inmensidad' together in our lovely little Airbnb in La Condesa, incorporating fiddle samples and live percussion, finding new combinations of sound and layering vocals. Co-writing with Pahua gave me a whole new perspective. We want Routes to Roots to be inclusive of every genre. Everyone has a different idea of where the term 'folk' starts and ends, and one of the things Routes to Roots has the potential to do is to enable more people to explore their own and others' cultural influences, within their individual contexts. It was very special to make a collaboration with Pahua whose music is rooted in a (relatively) young genre, which like all music styles before and since, is developing because of the culture surrounding it.

Mexico seems to have some kind of magic about it. I experienced many serendipitous bump-ins, coincidences and acts of incredible generosity while there. The wildest of these was running into fellow Scot Olaf Furniss (founder of Scottish music convention Wide Days) on the street in Mexico City. He introduced me to Pahua, and, in another twist of Mexican magic, his partner, the photographer Jannica Honey, one of my regular collaborators, was in town on the day of our shoot and came to photograph us.

Our third and final collaboration in Mexico took us to Cancún, where we met up with our Argentinian friends, El Guapo. After instantly hitting it off at WOMEX last October, we realised we were going to be in Mexico at the same time (there's that Mexican magic again). Juan Grabina and Joni Strugo's music mixes Latin American songwriting with rock, funk, jazz and other global music genres – their open and curious approach to music-making and culture fit Routes to Roots perfectly.

So, we joined the boys on the Riviera Maya leg of their Mexico tour. Our Caribbean road trip gave us our new song 'Juandi Baila en el Balcón', a sunny tune inspired by our equally sunny friend Juandi who hosted us in Cancún.

The initial work we have created for Routes to Roots has expanded my understanding of how we can take this intention of connecting communities through intercultural music collaborations and create something truly impactful together. I am hugely grateful to the artists who resonated with our vision and joined the Routes to Roots family, and to our Executive Director Christine Lauck for her organisational expertise.

See you next issue, for a dispatch from Chile, where we have just begun the next part of this transformative adventure...

CATRIONA PRICE

+ MORE *Follow Routes to Roots on Instagram/Facebook (@routestorootsmusic) and via routestorootsmusic.org*

Shane MacGowan's crusading ideas on Irish music

Tributes to the late Shane MacGowan (1957-2023) emphasise his songwriting, but his vision for Irish music was much broader than that, writes Toner Quinn

On August 4, 1991, at the famous Féile festival in Tipperary, Ireland, I had never heard the Pogues live before. My friends and I had made the 'Trip to Tipp' to see the host of new British indie bands that had just swept the charts – The La's, James and the Wonder Stuff. It was a new sound that came with floppy hair, big shirts and moody dancing. We would fit right in.

To this 17 year old, The Pogues were already past their pinnacle. It had been three years since 'Fairytale of New York'. *Hot Press*, the Irish rock magazine, had told us that their third album, *If I Should Fall from Grace with God* (1988), was one of the best Irish albums of modern times, but it was just one of many: several Irish acts were releasing recordings at the end of the 1980s and early 90s that still stand up.

While the British bands came with their hits to Féile, the rest of their sets were a little thin, and it is The Pogues' performance that I remember most. When they began, something shifted.

A group of teenagers at the centre of the stadium sat around smoking and eating burgers. But in the warm twilight, the music took hold. The Pogues did not build up slowly to their hits. They began at a ferocious pace. By the second song, the teenagers were on their feet and attempting Irish dancing, hands by their sides, reeling across the muddy field and back again. Soon the entire centre of the field was a frantic ocean of heads, crashing into each other, wilder than the front of stage even. It spread through the stadium. Shane MacGowan was, at this stage, '*ravaged by drugs… rendering him unable to perform*,' according to Richard Balls' 2021 biography of the singer, but he managed it just about, and if he looked out through his sunglasses that night, an hour from where he spent his formative years (he was Kent-born, but lived in Tipperary with family while his parents worked in England), it would have been clear to him that The Pogues had achieved their original vision, to bring their interpretation of Irish music to a new generation.

But that's not a vision that is talked about much these days. One of the interesting aspects of the many tributes paid to MacGowan over the weeks since he passed away is the almost complete emphasis on his songwriting. That was not actually the field of endeavour he set out to excel in.

'*I never intended to write as many songs as I did. I didn't want to be known as a songwriter*,' he said in the 2001 publication *A Drink with Shane MacGowan*. This book is a series of question-and-answer sessions between the artist and his wife Victoria Mary Clarke in which she probes him on a range of artistic, intellectual and personal questions. '*The crusade was to make Irish music hip*,' he adds, '*for… Irish music to make the language hip again. And the literature hip… to build Irish self-esteem, right? And for the whole world to know what an incredible wealth of culture we've contributed to the world, for such a small nation*.'

These were no small ambitions, but what exactly was the Irish music that would achieve this? To this son of Irish emigrants, Irish music was, firstly, what he experienced during his childhood in Tipperary – sing-songs at home and in the pub, hearing his uncle play tunes on the accordion. Secondly, he was influenced by the popular Irish music of the 70s, in particular Luke Kelly and The Dubliners, but also Foster & Allen, and as a teenager he was singing and playing Irish songs on guitar. By the late 1970s though, his obsession was with nihilistic 'no future' punk and the Sex Pistols (which included another child of Irish emigration, John Lydon) – MacGowan even created a fanzine for the genre called *Bondage*. Finally, he was viscerally against the smooth Irish music sound of the 80s, including Moving Hearts and the 'world music' of the time, or British electro-pop acts such as Nik Kershaw and Howard Jones.

In 1982, therefore, MacGowan helped establish a band of London musical drifters with the aim of creating a sound that brought all of these impulses together. What came out the other side was something wild and acoustic that not only appealed to Irish emigrants but also to young Irish people at home. Its rawness gelled with the economic struggle of the 1980s, the hedonism of Irish pub culture, the tension over the North; and it busted up old notions of Ireland at the same time. For young Irish people of that era, it was a case of being close to Irishness but not too close. The young could find their roots in the music of The Pogues but also keep their antipathy towards the Irish political class that was forever letting them down.

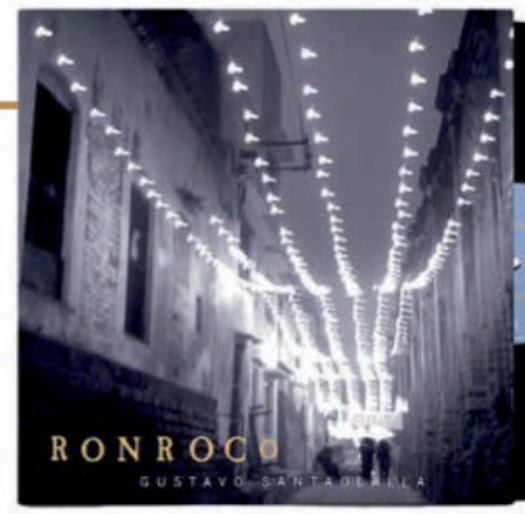
That, it would seem, was MacGowan's aim – his 'crusade' to find fidelity to Irishness and attack modern society's political conservatism at the same time – but, fortuitously, the band also became a vehicle for his thoughtful ballad songwriting, which few could have predicted, certainly not based on The Pogues' brilliantly raucous first album, *Red Roses for Me,* in 1984. The fact that it was his songs, rather than the musical style of The Pogues, that were celebrated so much over the past week tells us something about the way our musical past is read. It's much easier to understand the lyricism of 'Fairytale of New York' and 'A Rainy Night in Soho' than the ferocity of 'Waxie's Dargle' or 'Sally MacLennane'. But the two are equally important.

There is a famous RTÉ radio programme from September 1985 presented by BP Fallon when The Pogues were joined by about 40 people in the audience to talk about the popularity of the band, ideas of Irish music and what it all meant. The concertina player Noel Hill – then in his 20s – was in the audience and contested MacGowan's central premise, that what The Pogues were doing was playing Irish music. "This music," Hill said, "being labelled Irish music is a terrible abortion of words." For Hill, their playing of the 'Dingle Regatta' was just poor playing of a traditional tune (which in a way it was), but of course that wasn't the point.

MacGowan makes some astute points during the programme but the conversation veers off track and some of the band insist

Marcus Lynam

Shane MacGowan with Tim Robbins at Hal Willner's Rogue's Gallery, Dublin, 2008



WIN

To win the bundle, tell us how old Nonesuch Records will be turning this year.

See p25 for competition rules

NONESUCH PRIZE BUNDLE

Nonesuch Records will be turning 60 this year and we are very excited to offer a special prize bundle from the label, featuring five classic albums on vinyl, including their brand-new reissue of Gustavo Santaolalla's *Ronroco*. The bundle also includes Ry Cooder's *Chávez Ravine* (2005), Rhiannon Giddens' *You're the One* (2023), Kronos Quartet's *Pieces of Africa* (1992) and Astor Piazzolla's *The American Clavé Recordings* box set (2022).

they are not claiming to play Irish music at all (which of course they were). It's interesting to listen to all the cross-purposes and misunderstandings, with so many different concepts and ideas of what Irish music was. The conversation encapsulates how MacGowan and The Pogues' musical vision had struck right at the heart of the cultural debates of the decade.

These kinds of debates persisted into the 1990s. Have we moved on since then? In a way, yes. The core tradition does not worry too much about what new bands do with the music today, simply because the practice of solo traditional playing and singing is so strong. And the newspapers are not as powerful as they were, so musicians don't get as upset by them. It is also true, however, that this kind of extended and free discussion on Irish music is almost impossible to imagine on Irish radio today. The diversity of Irish music has now become a poster-boy for modern Ireland, but the ideas within it are rarely interrogated. As we saw with MacGowan and The Pogues, there is always a lot more going on under the surface than we imagine.

Just one month after Féile 1991, MacGowan was sacked from the band during a tour of Japan. In *A Drink with Shane MacGowan* he explains that he was already entirely miserable in the band and couldn't bear any more touring. That performance at Féile was to be one of his last, and, as Richard Balls pointed out in his biography, The Pogues would not play in Ireland again for another 17 years.

But on that Féile evening, perhaps MacGowan and The Pogues' musical crusade was already complete, whether we realised it or not. They left us with a radical example of how Irish music can reflect our society, and the extraordinary artists, such as MacGowan, that it can produce. TONER QUINN

+ MORE *Toner Quinn is the editor of Irish online music publication, Journal of Music. His new book, What Ireland Can Teach the World About Music, is published on February 1*

SONGLINES' 25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

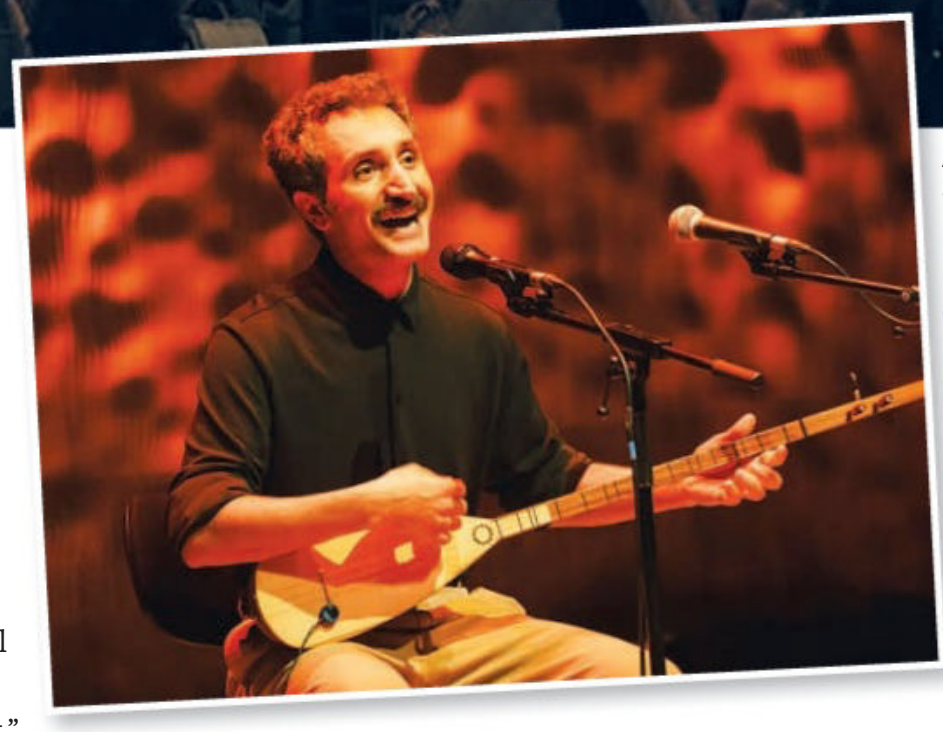
We will be celebrating our 25th anniversary with an extra-special show at the Barbican in London on March 25. There will be four great acts, each playing a 30-minute set. Salif Keita (pictured), 'the golden voice of Africa', will be performing with renowned *kora* player, and frequent collaborator, Mamadou Sidibe. Two recent *Songlines Music Awards* winners will be present, the joyous Québécois five-piece Le Vent du Nord and Serbia's Divanhana, representing a new generation of *sevdah* (Balkan blues) performers. Completing the line-up will be Mande jazz powerhouses Balimaya Project. It's set to be a night to remember. Tickets are available from bit.ly/songlines25th.

Thomas Dorn

Homelanding

A three-day festival in Germany shone a light on Kurdistan through its music

REPORT FROM GERMANY



Above: Aynur and Kayhan Kalhor in the Elbphilharmonie; Left: Ali Doğan Gönültaş

What is the sound of Kurdish music? On the evidence of the Kurdistan festival at the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, it's exuberant and protesting, sad and lamenting and fizzing with fun. Like the Gypsies or Roma, the Kurds are a people with no nation state, but they do have a homeland, split across four countries in the Middle East. The music is exhilarating.

Totally by chance, Turkish president Erdoğan – not friendly to the Kurds – was visiting Berlin the same day that the Kurdistan festival opened in Germany's second city, Hamburg. "It's a nice coincidence," says Martin Greve an expert in Kurdish music from Turkey, who was giving a talk at the festival which took place November 17-19. "Here in the most prestigious venue in Germany, this festival is presenting artistic music of the highest level. No political speeches, just the highest quality music, which is great."

Literally, Kurdistan means 'land of the Kurds' although politically it doesn't exist. The Kurds are spread across southeastern Turkey, northwestern Iran, northern Iraq and northern Syria. In the festival there were musicians and groups from most of these places as well as from the large Kurdish diaspora in Germany and elsewhere.

The headline concert in the 2,000-seat main hall featured Aynur (from Turkey), probably the leading Kurdish vocalist, and Kayhan Kalhor (from Iran). They began playing together – Aynur singing and strumming *tembur* lute, the most characteristic of Kurdish instruments, and

Kalhor playing *kamancheh* fiddle plus a soft (probably unnecessary) piano accompaniment. It was a slow love song, the notes hanging in the air, and a beautiful opening.

Kalhor then performed a string orchestra version of his *Silent City*, the piece he wrote as an elegy for the attack on Halabja, a Kurdish city, in 1988 by Saddam Hussein. It grows from a soft drone note into an intense kamancheh solo with string orchestra; Kalhor seemed like the vulnerable heart of the city with the dozen strings lamenting around him.

Aynur, as with Kalhor, was backed by Hamburg's Ensemble Resonanz. She's a powerful singer and has a huge fan base here. They fly Kurdish flags and dance in the balconies. One of the great things about this hall is that it has seats all around on various levels and feels very intimate, although it's very large.

The Elbphilharmonie is one of the most talked-about music venues in Europe. Opened in 2017, its main hall has what's been called 'vineyard' seating on several levels all around the stage area. It's mainly used for orchestral music, but the Elbphilharmonie is also interested in reaching other communities. "Last year we did a Sufi festival," says Cathy Wilkinson from the artistic planning team. "We noticed we had such a diverse audience, not just our white middle class public, but getting to different communities. The Kurdistan idea grew out of that." The other concerts were in the smaller hall of the Elbphilharmonie, although it's not so small with 500 seats. They were virtually all sold out.

One of the most enjoyable concerts was Ali Doğan Gönültaş with his trio. He sings and plays *tanbur* with clarinet and percussion. He's a rising star on the Kurdish music scene and has a totally engaging personality, smiling, laughing and inviting you in. His song 'Entercîme' about a dressmaker trying to seduce women in the villages he's visiting is super catchy. How politically correct it is I'm not sure. But Gönültaş is a first-rate performer.

His latest album *Kiği* (reviewed in #192) is named after the town in Turkey where he's from. It's deep in southeastern Anatolia close to Dersim where massacres of Turkish Kurds occurred in 1937-1938. Gönültaş' mother-tongue is Zaza, a language local to the Dersim area but different to the more widely spoken Kermanji Kurdish language.

"I must tell my stories," says Gönültaş, who sings in Zaza, Kermanji, Turkish and Armenian – the latter were the majority population in the region until the massacres of 1915. "I want to show the diversity of civilisations there were in this area," he says. What Gönültaş likes about the Hamburg experience is reaching both a local Kurdish community and a wider German public.

One day of the festival had a particular focus on Dersim because it's a heartland of Kurdish culture in central Anatolia where there's a strong belief in Alevism as opposed to mainstream Sunni Islam and because the massacres there have fuelled a whole repertoire of songs and laments. "We don't know exactly how many people were killed," says Martin Greve, who gave a talk to introduce the region. "Official figures say 30,000 but most probably much more. Every family was affected. Today it's the third generation since the massacres and they grew up with the silence of the Turkish government on the subject. It's something you feel in the music of Ahmet Aslan for instance – this sense of fear, terror and silence."

The Turkish government renamed the area Tunceli to try and erase the name of the place and it was only in 2011 that Erdoğan called the massacres "one of the most tragic events in our recent history." The musicians singing about Dersim included the white-haired protest singer and guitarist Ahmet Aslan, Maviş Güneşer who specialises in the laments of Dersim, and the brothers Metin & Kemal Kahraman (all now resident in Germany).

There were two newer Kurdish bands featured in the festival. Kurdophone, based in Vienna, are jazz oriented and Danûk are much more rootsy with five members on vocals, *saz*, guitar, *duduk*-like instruments and percussion. They play tunes from weddings, *nowruz* celebrations and arrangements of archival recordings from 1912 they uncovered in Vienna. The musicians are Kurdish, Iranian and Arabic. "With all these conflicts in the region," says their Syrian-born singer Ferhad Feyssal, "we need to share. We have done it in music, and I know we can do it in life."

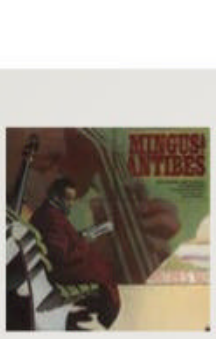
SIMON BROUGHTON

Aynur and Kayhan Kalhor

Daniel Dittus

The 4 Corners and Centre of **Aron & the Jeri Jeri Band**'s Universe

Aron Ottignon and Bakane Seck take turns choosing their most formative works: "Thelonius Monk remains my favourite pianist and composer of all time," Aron declares



Charles Mingus
Mingus at Antibes
(Atlantic, 1979)

I'm drawn to this album not necessarily because it's the best of all time, but for the rich history it encapsulates. This live concert features three pivotal artists – Charlie Mingus, Eric Dolphy and especially Bud Powell. Each of them boasts incredible individual albums deserving a spot in my top five, but the allure of having them all on one album compelled me. Bud Powell's influence on me can't be ignored. His presence on this album resonates deeply with my musical journey. Eric Dolphy, the most signature improviser of the 20th century, captivates me with his bass clarinet. I look forward to exploring more with this unique sound in the future. *ARON OTTIGNON*

THE CENTRE

Thelonius Monk with John Coltrane
Thelonious Monk with John Coltrane
(Jazzland Records, 1961)

A perfect blend of performance, composition, improvisation and sheer genius... a rare convergence of jazz giants, with kudos to the producer and managers for orchestrating [it]... The historical context and artists' struggles add depth to the listening experience. Featuring two 20th-century genius composer-improvisers, the album includes one of my all-time favourite songs, 'Ruby, My Dear'. 'Trinkle Tinkle' [is] my go-to piece for checking my piano technique, and the desire to learn 'Nutty' lingers. 'Epistrophy' was a regular in my jazz trio repertoire and 'Off Minor' carries memories from my teenage years when 'Monk's Mood' was a jazz standard in Auckland. Thelonious Monk... leaves an indelible mark. His distinct voice, both in playing and composing, is not easily replicated. He remains my favourite pianist and composer of all time. *ARON OTTIGNON*

INTERVIEW BY RUSS SLATER JOHNSON

Baaba Maal
Yele
(Mango, 1993)

This album was a special one, thanks to Baaba Maal. Playing in his band all over the world was a strong growth experience for me. A long time ago, when we were touring everybody was waiting for us to play [the title-track]. It was the most important song for our live show. Everyone was touched and the crowd was going crazy. Carlos Santana came to listen to Baaba play 'Yele'. We performed with Ernest Ranglin at the Royal Albert Hall... This album touched my soul. The guitar riff and the unique voice of Baaba Maal was transcendent... it was also very popular at that time, and had a strong influence on Senegalese music. It touched my heart and my growth as an artist. *BAKANE SECK*

Voodoo
D'Angelo
(Virgin Records, 2000)

Selecting an album from my generation was a challenge with the multitude of options, but one that consistently stands out as an all-rounder is *Voodoo*. Released in 2000, it became the soundtrack of my life as I ventured into the world after leaving home. Back then, I was a jazz musician... Today, *Voodoo* serves as a benchmark in terms of production, composition and arranging. It has become a guiding reference point, shaping my approach to creating music. Striving to meet the standards set by this album is a constant pursuit, and the closer we get to achieving a complete work akin to *Voodoo*, the closer we come to our own success . *ARON OTTIGNON*

Bob Marley & The Wailers
Kaya
(Island Records, 1978)

I was listening to Bob Marley growing up. 'Get Up, Stand Up' from *Burnin'* is my favourite track. Still I choose *Kaya* for the story in my [artistic] life. When I was 18, I went to the UK for the first time ever, I found myself recording in Bob Marley's mixing engineer [Groucho]'s studio in London for Baaba Maal... Groucho was our mixer at the time, and would always invite us downstairs. It was there that he handed me Bob Marley records to listen to, and among them was *Kaya*... The discipline, the balance, the music, the vocal harmonies, the instrumentation and the strong presence of Marley: it was a big inspiration. *BAKANE SECK*

+ ALBUM *Aron & the Jeri Jeri Band's new album Dama Bëgga ñibi (I Want To Go Home) is reviewed on p52*

Gabba

The new *joikers* on the scene are set to storm Celtic Connections. "The point is to make joik accessible to everyone," they tell ***Simon Broughton***

Not to be confused with a London-based Abba tribute band, Gabba are a Norwegian group featuring Sámi singer John André Eira. The name Gabba translates as 'ivory-coated reindeer' in Northern Sámi. Their self-titled debut album won the Traditional Music prize at the Spellemanns, the Norwegian Grammys, for 2022 and they are one of half-a-dozen Norwegian bands showcasing this year at Glasgow's Celtic Connections. I caught them at last summer's Førde Festival.

Using frontman Eira's Sámi *joiks* as their starting point, the band aim "to put this joik form into a musical setting that we can all enjoy," says bass player Espen Bakke. "Previously joik in Norway has been pretty traditional and the point is to make joik accessible to everyone." Alongside Eira's vocals, the band includes trumpet, electric guitar, bass and drums.

John André Eira, aged 32, was born in Máze (Masi in Norwegian) in the northern Sámi region. Both sides of his family were involved in reindeer herding; his two brothers are currently both working as reindeer herders. Eira is an extremely skilled joik master – he released a solo album in 2014 and won the Sámi Grand Prix in 2017. Several uncles, cousins and other relatives have also been previous winners.

Eira is blind from birth and he says that has given him a particularly striking ability to identify sounds – from bird songs to particular joiks. "To be born blind, I think I was really privileged because I would be doing something really different right now," he says. "It's been a pleasure not to be able to see. Otherwise, I would probably be a reindeer herder now – nothing bad about reindeer herders – but I would miss out."

All the 12 songs on *Gabba* are based on personal joiks belonging to particular people, yet they contain no lyrical content. 'Neahpi' means 'nephew' and the song pays tribute to a cousin of Eira who is a motocross competitor. It's a fanfare-like joik, which might also trace the leaping ups and downs of a track he's riding. The trumpet then enters with a less athletic but still celebratory melody. Another song, 'Mihkkelaš', is a short, repeated phrase over electric guitar separated by different guitar riffs from Christoffer Mietle Furuheim that sound rather Malian. "Mihkkelaš was my great, great grandfather," explains Eira. "It's a very old joik from the late 19th century. I heard it from an archive recording."

'Hej-Hejjá' is about a joik teacher Eira had called Hendrick, which is Hejjá in Sámi. It's performed by the whole band as a kind of call-and-response joik. "The other guys said, 'let's spread out the voices so it gets polyphonic,' although harmonies aren't really common or approved of," says Bakke.

"When I hear a joik, I imagine the people or the places that are being joiked about," says Eira. "If I am joiking my mother's joik, I can easily hear her voice. It's like a way to remember people, because the melodies themselves evoke some kind of feeling about the person." ◆

+ LIVE *Gabba are supporting Adwaith on January 27 at CCA, Glasgow, as part of Celtic Connections*

Jonas Eriksen

TAKE NOTE

the olllam

Jo Frost gets her groove on to an unlikely fusion of *uilleann* pipes and whistles with knotty, Detroit post-rock. "It's quite complex, clever music. They're like pop songs in a way," she finds out

Sunday afternoon at WOMAD 2023 and there's a mass of heads bobbing up and down at the d&b Soundscape stage to a curious mix of pipes, whistles, drums, keys and guitars. Seated centre-stage and facing each other as if competing in a duel are the key protagonists: pipers Tyler Duncan and John McSherry. Their relationship is central to this band, one that has gained a cult-like status since releasing their debut self-titled album in 2012.

The younger of the pipers is Duncan, who aged 13 became obsessed with the Irish trad group Lúnasa, in particular their master *uilleann* piper John McSherry. Duncan met his idol on his first trip to Ireland, at the Willie Clancy Week (a 'Mardi Gras' for Irish music). "I met Tyler way, way back," recalls McSherry. "When he was living in Dublin, I would meet up with him and teach him some pipes. That was when he was around 14." Over the years this mentor-mentee relationship developed into a friendship and eventually a band they called the olllam.

It was McSherry's sister who came up with the name – '*ollam*' is an old Irish word for the ancient bards to the Irish kings. "The word has actually evolved now," explains McSherry. "It's become the word for a professor or a person of knowledge so we added the extra 'l', because it's three of us in the core of the band." The third core member is drummer Michael Shimmin, a former bandmate of Duncan's in Millish, a Michigan-based Celtic fusion band. Also instrumental in the band's sound and vibe is Vulfpeck's bass player Joe Dart, someone Duncan describes as being 'the groove master,' and who plays with the band live and in the studio.

There is an undeniable funky grooviness to this mash-up of Celtic trad music underpinned with thick, heavy bass and percussion. So, what is it that makes it so groovy? Shimmin explains that it all starts with the melody. "We write more in the format of a song as opposed to a traditional tune," with McSherry adding: "We didn't want to follow the traditional format of an A part, B part, then repeat."

Neither McSherry nor Duncan write music, so remarkably it's all done by ear, using voice memos instead of notation. This has proved a challenge for Scottish piper Ross Ainslie who will be playing with the band during their 2024 tour dates, while Duncan takes a break. Fortunately Ainslie was already very familiar with the band: "I listened to their first album loads, because there was a real buzz about it."

His first task was to transcribe all the music, which took him about two weeks. "It's now just a case of trying to familiarise myself with it all. It's quite complex, clever music. They're like pop songs in a way; they have definite choruses and peaks and long intros. It's cool; it's definitely got a groove. Every tune takes you on a journey and you can't not get into it!"

We speak in November when the tour is about two months away. "You know, it's like a mountain and at the moment, I'm halfway up. There's so much to learn… the nuances of how they play this stuff, all the embellishments and where you breathe." So does he play the uilleann pipes as well as the whistles? "Well, I play a wee bit, but I wouldn't be playing them in front of John McSherry!" he laughs.

The ten-date tour includes a gig at the iconic Glaswegian venue, the Barrowland Ballroom (renowned for its acoustics and sprung dance floor), for Celtic Connections. Given the band haven't performed at the festival for ten years and that a Scot will be centre stage, it's fair to predict that the local crowd will be getting their groove on.

+ LIVE *the olllam are on tour in the UK and Ireland from January 25 (they play Celtic Connections on January 27)*

Zé Bateira

A gathering of notes

Simon Broughton attended a rare and extraordinary night from Raagi Balwant Singh on December 16, set in one of London's most charming locales

This was an exceptional evening for two reasons. First the venue: The Music Room (TMR) in Wembley (London) is run by Afghan-born Rahmat Simab and it's hard to think of a better place in which to hear South Asian music. There are cushions on the floor, a few sofas and chairs – illumination comes from lanterns, candles and sensitive lighting on the stage. The walls are decorated with instruments – Afghan *rubabs*, a violin, mandolin and *sarangi* – and in the corner a portrait of revered Afghan singer Sarahang. The room seats no more than 100 people, so performances are close and intimate.

The evening was titled *Sur-Sangat* (A Gathering of Notes), although for Sikhs, *sangat* also refers to a 'congregation', and I was very happy to be in this congregation to hear vocalist Raagi Balwant Singh (a new name to me) with Harpreet Singh on *tabla* and Kirpal Singh Panesar on bowed *esraj*. There were also musicians on harmonium and *tambura*. Balwant Singh was born in Sri Bhaini Sahib, a village in Indian Punjab famous for Sikhism and music, but now lives like the other musicians in Leicester.

He began with a slow growling *dhrupad*, but then moved onto much more interesting *khyal* performances of songs by the various masters that had taught him. His strong, virtuoso vocal was at the centre, but the esraj echoed it like a halo, or aural incense around the voice. And then the spectacular tabla, which was actually a larger *jori* tabla with the lower instrument covered with a sort of dough, rather than the usual black resin. It gave a much deeper sound and when hit the dough flew off spectacularly in all directions. The lyrics, in Hindi and Sanskrit, praised divinities in Hindu, Sikh and Muslim faiths. The words became like tongue-twisting percussive rhythms as they were repeated in a remarkable virtuoso rendition. It was something rare and extraordinary.

SIMON BROUGHTON

Sebastian Schutyser, Hanne Kaunicnik

SMITHSONIAN SWAG

We have another very special competition for you this issue with Smithsonian Folkways offering two prize bundles, both containing CDs of three of their latest releases: *Ears of the People: Ekonting Songs from Senegal and The Gambia*, Aga Khan Master Musicians (pictured)'s *Nowruz* and Damir Imamović's *The World and All That It Holds*.

WIN

To win, tell us, how old did Smithsonian Folkways turn recently? See our December 2023 issue for some help!

See p25 for competition rules

SAVE THE DATES

Songlines Encounters Festival 2024

May 16-19 are the days for this year's *Songlines Encounters Festival* at Kings Place in London. As ever, we will feature hand-picked artists that have caught our attention from around the world and here in Britain. We're delighted to include the UK premiere performance of female Gnawa singer Asmâa Hamzaoui and her group Bnat Timbouktou as well as Mongolian singer Enkhjargal Erkhembayar, better known as Enji (pictured) with her trio. Also appearing will be Argentinean singer and shaman Soema Montenegro and the London-based Sudanese band The Scorpios, with more artists to be announced and on sale in February.

+ MORE *For tickets and info visit kingsplace.co.uk/songlines*

SPOTLIGHT

Syriana

In the wake of Nick Page's passing, Bernard O'Neill has completed the album the duo began. Contemplating borders and politics, ***Robin Denselow*** discovers the collaborative work has been over a decade in the making

The long-awaited new Syriana album *1325 Ibn Battutah* is both an intriguing concept work, based on the extraordinary life of the 14th-century traveller Ibn Battuta, and a tribute to the late Nick Page, Syriana's co-founder, who died in 2021 while the album was still being recorded. Master-minded and co-produced by the Irish bass player Bernard O'Neill, who wrote the melodies and plays an impressive array of instruments, it's a suitably epic undertaking that involves Natacha Atlas and other great female singers, along with musicians from many of the regions that Battuta [also spelled Battutah] visited.

Bernard first became fascinated by Battuta's story back in 2009, when he was on a plane on his way to Damascus "with a folder of string arrangements in my carry-on luggage," to record with the Pan Arab Strings of Damascus. His wife had found Tim Mackintosh-Smith's edition of *The Travels of Ibn Battutah* in an Oxfam shop, and O'Neill enthused to Page about the life and writings of this extraordinary Maghrebi. Battuta was just 21 when he left his home in Tangiers in 1325 and he continued travelling on and off for 29 years, by which time he had travelled some 75,000 miles, visiting not just Damascus, where he studied, but some 40 countries on the modern-day map. Accompanied by an entourage that included slave girls, he became a celebrity voyager, visiting everywhere from Egypt to Iraq, India, China, the Maldives, Sudan and Mali. Sitting on the plane, O'Neill and Page discussed this "incredible story – it deals with a world without controls, because Battuta could travel anywhere, unlike the situation today."

It would clearly make a great concept album, but they were then working on the first Syriana album, *The Road to Damascus*, which would be released on Real World the following year (2010). The band had started when Nick Page, that great global fusion exponent best known for his work with first Transglobal Underground and then Dub Colossus, had met up with *qanun* and *oud* player Abdullah Chhadeh. O'Neill joined on bass for a project "to explore how two Western writers could initiate a dialogue with an Arab classical composer/performer… Peter Gabriel expressed an interest, so we continued to develop [the] idea." The debut album mixed moody, atmospheric pieces against the more adventurous 'The Great Game', in which qanun was matched against Page's thunderous guitar lines, though when the band made a much-praised appearance at WOMAD 2010 it included no Syrians. Chhadeh was no longer in the line-up and the Pan Arab Strings were unable to leave the Middle East.

Further problems followed. Pro-democracy demonstrations in Syria in 2011 were violently suppressed by the government, and by 2012 the conflict had expanded into a brutal civil war. O'Neill and Page decided to reappraise their project "especially as we were showing projections of pre-war Syria in our concerts, and the idea of perpetuating a mythical image was not to our liking." So, by early 2012 they decided that the band should stop performing.

But Syriana was merely on hold, as was the idea of the Ibn Battuta project. Page remained very much involved, though his main concern was Dub Colossus, and O'Neill says he "wanted to give me this to do." Working from his home studio in an old barn in Larroque, in France, O'Neill started writing the album in January 2019 and "spent 30 days and wrote a piece a day." He sent the files of his work to Page, then living in Spain. "And he would send a single sheet back – 'yes', 'no', 'what about such-and such?'" COVID-19 and lockdown made it impossible for Page to visit. "So, he would send me guitar parts, and I'd send him bass parts for Dub Colossus. It was us working together. I used to call him three times a day."

But O'Neill kept going after Page's death, helped by musician friends who "recognised my situation and offered support above and beyond the call." The aim was to create an album totally different to *The Road to Damascus*, "because the subject matter is different, and I didn't want this album to be a sequel." So there is no qanun this time round, because "the qanun was so dominant on the first album, and too geo-centric. This is far more adventurous." Though, as the album is being released under the Syriana banner, Syrian styles are still represented, through the one Syrian musician on the set, Mazin Abu Sayf. A multi-instrumentalist, he is based in London, where he was a "civil engineer on the Crossrail project." He played accordion on the first Syriana album, and here also plays *ney* flute and violin.

As Battuta was Moroccan and travelled so widely, O'Neill was able to make use of a wide range of instruments and textures to illustrate his journeys "so all the tracks are significant to part of his travels." The set starts with rousing, chanting vocals and brass, underpinned by Bernard's solid bass work on 'Feast at Antaliyah', built around recordings with

"It deals with a world without controls, because Battuta could travel anywhere, unlike the situation today"

The Sufi Musicians of Meknes, recorded in Morocco. He says he was following Page's ideas on fusion projects, "that any time you change a culture, you have to start with something that is completely authentic, to set the benchmark. We talked for months before I put pen to paper, to justify what was going on."

Elsewhere, O'Neill plays everything from cello and accordion to piano and "a lot of organ" (after all, he was an organ scholar when he was 16). He also adds bowed psaltery, "a great sound, but if you use it too much it can sound like an early music album… so there is also electric bass and baritone guitar." There's brass on the album, provided by Pip Eastop on trumpet, Ashley Slater on trombone and Maren Lueg on soprano sax, "because if you look at 14th-century prints from Morocco, the trumpets are everywhere!" The cast also includes Eliza Marshall on flute, Harutyun Chkolyan on *duduk*, recorded in Armenia, and Pontic *lyra* from Matthaios Tsahouridis, who had played in Nick Page's *Xáos* project, recorded in Greece. Bernard then "worked around" their contributions in his barn studio.

There are also far more vocals on the new album, with the Kurdish singer and *saz* player Umit Ceyhan providing the voice of the elderly Battuta, writing his memoirs, while five female singers, who almost all wrote their own lyrics, provide the voices of the slaves who accompanied him. Esbe is on fine, charming form, singing in Sephardic Spanish on 'Las Puntas', Olcay Bayir is backed by flutes on the gently stately 'Al Karak, Kole Kizin Sarkisi'. The Portuguese singer Maria João Branco is featured on the driving, brassy 'Como Fantasmas', while Mouna Eddrou, from Meknes, sings in Arabic and French on 'Qasr Al Zafiyah'. The final song, 'Law Inta Kont Hina', comes from Natacha Atlas, who decided that it should be a homage to Nick Page, with whom she worked in Transglobal Underground and during her solo career.

1325 Ibn Battutah may have taken five years to complete, but it's an impressive achievement, and a suitably adventurous tribute to O'Neill's former Syriana partner "who was not just a working colleague, we were very close friends." ◆

Bernard O'Neill (left) and Nick Page (right) in Berlin

Rick O'Toole

SIMON SAYS…

Simon Broughton chats politics, polyrhythms and percussion with musical maverick Enzo Avitabile in Naples

In Naples in December, I met up with Enzo Avitabile, which was a real thrill after more than ten years. I was last with him in 2011 during the filming of a documentary (*Enzo Avitabile Music Life*) about him by the late Jonathan Demme, when the director described him as the "spiritual son of John Lennon."

Avitabile, who studied at Naples conservatoire, is a maverick figure who speaks out for the marginalised and who I've always felt is like the soul of Naples. His songs are always in Neapolitan dialect. At Napoli World, where I met him, he presented a show called *Meglio 'na Tammurriata ca 'na Guerra* (*Tammurriata* is Better than War) in the spectacular surroundings of the Bellini Theatre opera house.

Tammurriata is a kind of Neapolitan dance and song, and the show included a song from 20 years ago welcoming refugees to Italy, which is exactly the opposite of the message being put out by Giorgia Meloni, Italy's prime minister since last October. "The song 'Paisà' is dedicated to people who are coming to this country. They should be welcomed just as Italians were once welcomed as fellow countrymen into the United States," said Avitabile. "Music is a message that goes to the heart. On hearing music people can reposition themselves in a different way from hearing a political speech. Music can reach places that rhetoric cannot."

On stage Enzo Avitabile played saxophone and his plucked *pentarpa* or *arpina* – copied from a Roman fresco. Here, he appeared with musicians on guitar and *tammorra* frame drum and Lucia Molisse and Anna Foggia, two ladies in their 80s dancing around each other, their arms outstretched with castanets. They were a joy to watch. And there were guest singers, notably the young Neapolitan Irene Scarpato who performed 'Figliola ca Guarda 'o Mare' (The Girl Who Looks at the Sea). It's a personification of Naples, the city looking at the sea. The audience were frequently mouthing the words of Avitabile's songs. The Napoli World concerts are free to attend thanks to a local tourist tax.

Enzo Avitabile sings to the crowd; Below: Lucia Molisse and Anna Foggia enjoy the music

I was surprised to see not just the old ladies on stage, but also a number of the members of the audience with wooden castanets, which I've always associated with Spain. Avitabile told me they are really pan-Mediterranean and mentions a mosaic in Pompeii of a lady playing castanets and the metal castanets or *qaraqab* used in Moroccan Gnawa music.

After the performance, he greeted me in the foyer of the Teatro Bellini beneath a fresco of an instrument looking very like his pentarpa. He gave me a book he's compiled of rhythms and scales. There are 36 rhythms from across the world plus a dozen from the *bottari*, barrel players, that he's worked with in nearby Caserta. In addition, there are 67 Middle Eastern and oriental modes.

Avitabile described his performance as a form of prayer for Scampia, a suburb in the north of Naples famed for its drugs, crime and Camorra mafia activities. "Scampia is where hope for new life resides," he said. "My goal tonight was to give a message to the audience and leave them thinking there is still something to do to change the situation." ◆

Simon Broughton

Next Issue…

April 2024 (#196)
On sale March 1

The latest film of Congolese/Belgian musician and director **Baloji** (pictured) has received rave reviews at Cannes. We speak to him about the film, *Omen*, and its soundtrack. We'll find out about Chilean rapper **Ana Tijoux**'s long-awaited new album and world tour, and we'll also talk to **Asmâa Hamzaoui**, Gnawa music's female ambassador, and **Katherine Priddy**, whose latest work has us swooning. **Michael Volpe**, founder of Opera Holland Park, will explain how he loves opera, Neapolitan folk song and Phil Collins simultaneously; there will be a *Beginner's Guide* to Colombian bandleader **Fruko**; introductions to **Delasi** and **Lair** and a guide to some of the music and trends to look forward to in 2024.

FEEDBACK

Letters, shout-outs, comments, emails and everything in between

Get in touch – we'd love to hear from you!

Write to:
Email: letters@songlines.co.uk
Songlines, Mark Allen Group,
St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road
London, SE24 0PB, UK
We reserve the right to edit correspondence

WEBSITE
songlines.co.uk
GIG GUIDE
songlines.co.uk/gig-guide

X
@SonglinesMag
FACEBOOK
facebook.com/songlines
INSTAGRAM
@SonglinesMag

Adams & Durante Cast Spells on Stroud

Last night I was in the Prince Albert, Stroud, again. What an extraordinary experience that I wanted to share with *Songlines*. What a privilege to see two experienced musicians who aren't afraid to share their emotions with their audience.

I'd like to suggest a new way that performers can play live gigs for an intimate experience – 'Tiny Stage Productions'! Having recently discovered The Prince Albert in Stroud, it has been a revelation to share such a tiny space with musicians who have filled auditoriums and performed at festivals around the globe.

After their performance at WOMAD 2023 Justin [Adams] asked the audience if anyone could recommend small venues where they could appear. As a result of this I've come up with two already! By offering themselves to smaller venues, just for the sheer love of performance, and the opportunity to share new material, they create a closer channel of communication between performers and audience.

Justin's guitar playing is well known. On this night, there were loping desert blues, a delicate *raga* and skilful fretwork, reflecting the many musical influences he has absorbed over the past four decades.

Mauro [Durante] comes from a tradition of healing music, deep in the heel of Italy, where *tarantella/pizzica* music is well known. Mauro peels back layers of the 'now' to open our ancestral hearts with ancient rhythms and the poignant, urgent strings of his violin. Using a wood shell *tambour*, frame drum and tambourine his urgent percussion is more than a match for a traditional drum kit.
With music from their album *Still Moving*, and several new pieces, they held the room close with an honesty and integrity born of their musical trust in each other.

For their encore, Justin brought his experience of the call to prayer heard in Rajasthan, with haunting effect. Mauro's voice over Justin's guitar was gentle, heart searching, timeless and spell-binding. As the last notes faded there was a silence, a pause, followed by a collective gasp from the audience, then a quiet wave of heartfelt applause.

The music *jinns* were in the room that night.
Anita Scott, Ledbury

What Readers Want!

Congratulations on *Songlines'* 25th anniversary! [As far as magazine content goes,] as someone from the UK, I get less excited about reading British folk stuff and more from other countries and cultures.

I'm also excited to hear less about guitar-based music and more from groups who are pushing the envelope elsewhere. More electronic is also great!

That said, I always enjoy the mag and find plenty to get interested in, so I'll trust you!
Ray Favourite on Facebook

READER PROFILE

PAUL BONHAM, LONDON

HOW DID YOU FIRST DISCOVER SONGLINES?
I knew it from being at Glastonbury since a kid… When I got a job in an office with a subscription, I read it monthly. When I left I missed it and now love when my mag arrives once a month.

WHAT'S ON YOUR STEREO?
Right now Midori Takada, Early Fern, Juni Habel, Lonnie Holley and Nkosazana Daughter

FAVOURITE ALBUMS?
Neil Young *After the Goldrush*, or maybe Bonnie 'Prince' Billy *I See a Darkness*.

FAVOURITE NEW ARTIST?
Cerys Hafana – magical and hypnotizing.

FAVOURITE GIGS?
Youssou N'dour at Yaram's Culture Week/Indigo O2 and Sam Lee's *Singing with Nightingales* in a nature reserve in Essex.

WORST LIVE EXPERIENCE?
Swimming out of Truck Festival in 2007… We had to cancel due to flooding. Sometimes nature has other plans…

If you would like to be our next Reader Profile, please email us your answers and a picture to letters@songlines.co.uk

AT SHORT NOTICE

More Manu Chao would be lovely [to see in the magazine] but, just keep showcasing the world of music.
From: Scott Pollard on Facebook

Thanks to @SonglinesMag for republishing @garthcart1 'Orchestra Baobab : A Beginners Guide' (2017) in the weekly e-newsletter. Discovered their *La Belle Epoque* 2CD set of sides from Senegal in 1970s. With Vols 2 & 3 my wants list just expanded.
From: @TonyBurke2010

Thanks to @SonglinesMag – I have just heard [Bounaly's *Dimanche à Bamako*] on @Bandcamp and other sounds. Terrific.
From: @julian_gibbs

WIN

Mulatu Astatke's *Mulatu of Ethiopia* on coloured vinyl **11** ◆
Nonesuch bundle: Ry Cooder, Rhiannon Giddens, Kronos Quartet, Astor Piazolla and Gustavo Santaolalla **15** ◆
Smithsonian Folkways bundle: *Ears of the People: Ekonting Songs*, Aga Khan Master Musicians and Damir Imamović **21**

COMPETITIONS Submit your entry for each competition via the website: **songlines.co.uk/competitions**. Winners will be chosen at random. Only one entry per household. No cash alternatives. If you would prefer not to be sent details of other *Songlines* products and services, or products from other carefully selected companies, please tick the relevant box on the entry form. Closing date for this issue's competitions (unless otherwise stated): Mar 15 2024

Baba Commandant
(1973-2023)
Activist for Mande music

King Sunny Adé.

The death from malaria of Mamadou Sanou – better known as the gritty-voiced Baba Commandant – robs Burkina Faso of one its most singular and charismatic musicians and serves as a reminder of how harsh life can still be in sub-Saharan Africa. Only six months earlier, he had led his Mandingo Band on a successful first tour of North America to promote the group's third album *Sonbonbela*, which *Songlines* praised as *'old-fashioned West African dance music at its high-octane best with not a synth or an AutoTune anywhere to be heard.'* Born in Burkina's second city of Bobo-Dioulasso, a centre of Mande tradition, he began his career as a professional performer, not as a singer but as an eight-year-old dancer with the Koule Dafourou troupe. He went on to sing with the group Dounia and then the Afromandingo Band and also played the *donso ngoni* (hunter's harp) in the band of legendary Burkinabé vocalist Victor Démé.

A versatile musician who was equally at home performing at Sunday cabarets in Bobo-Dioulasso or with the sound systems in the clubs of the capital Ouagadougou, he formed the Mandingo Band to fuse traditional Mande roots music with his love of the funkier Nigerian styles of Fela Kuti and

With a line-up that included the stellar electric guitar playing of Issouf Diabate, supported by Massibo Taragna on bass and Sana Mohamed Fahade on drums, *Juguya*, his debut album with the Mandingo Band, appeared in 2015 and was followed four years later by *Siri Ba Kele*, a Top Of The World choice in #147 (May 2019).

By the time of 2022's *Sonbonbela*, Taragna had died and been replaced by Wendeyida Ouedraogo, and Abbas Kabore and Nickie Dembele had been added on percussion and *balafon*. The album found him sounding more vibrant than ever and at only 50 years old he had so much still to give.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

Lisandro Meza
(1937-2023)
Colombian accordion giant

Meza earned the nickname, *'El Rey sin Corona'* (The King without a Crown), after a performance at the Valledupar *vallenato* festival in 1968. Duelling it out on his accordion, he reached the final only to be beaten by Nicolás 'Colacho' Mendoza, but for those present there were two champions that night, albeit one would never get to wear the crown. Meza was born in El Piñal, a small town in Colombia's northern Caribbean region. He first found fame as a singer and accordionist as a member of the infamous Los Corraleros de Majagual, a breeding ground for some of Colombia's finest purveyors of tropical music.

He set up his own group, Lisandro Meza y su Conjunto, in the late 60s and would record numerous albums for Discos Fuentes filled with *cumbia*, vallenato, *charanga*, *merengue* and other styles of the day. Yet, he was never afraid to push boundaries, with his cover of Fela Kuti's 'Shakara', recorded as 'Shacalao', becoming a surprise hit, and then there's his setting of one of Gabriel Escorcia Gravini's poems to music as 'La Miseria Humana'. A metaphysical rumination on death, quite how Meza turned it into a ten-minute epic that is still regularly played at Christmas parties in Colombia, is a tale in itself.

In 1979 he created Banda Los Hijos de la Niña Luz, a big band of accordion, brass and percussion with his wife and children, that would tour the Colombian coastline in a brown and white caravan. He had devoted fans in the US and Mexico but on Colombia's Caribbean coast there was a special connection. After passing away on December 23, a ceremony for his death was held in Sincelejo on Christmas Day. His famous songs accompanied the coffin as a parade followed it to the city's sports centre. The town mayor then declared three days of mourning.

RUSS SLATER JOHNSON

Latinus TV

Rashid Khan
(1968-2024)
Much-loved Indian singer

India is grieving for the singer Rashid Khan, who died in his adopted hometown of Kolkata on 9 January, aged 55. The Ustad had a history of prostate cancer. A supremely skilled vocalist with a gorgeous, soulful timbre, he was held in great affection by his peers. At his state funeral, held at the cultural centre Rabindra Sadan, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee led an A-list of the city's artists in mourning, while crowds massed outside. He was once described by Bhimsen Joshi as *'the future of Indian classical music.'* That future has gone too soon.

Born in Badayun, Uttar Pradesh, Rashid Khan was the great-grandson of Inayat Hussain Khan, who founded the tradition in which he was trained, the Rampur-Sahaswan *gharana*. He was just six when he began learning from Nissar Hussain Khan, a stern teacher who insisted he rose at 4am to practise. At about 11 he moved to Kolkata along with his guru, becoming a scholar at the ITC Sangeet Research Academy. He was 18 before he really began to love making music, but what emerged was a sublime artist.

His best-known song was 'Aaoge Jab Tum', from the 2007 Hindi film *Jab We Met*, which made him a household name.

Performing at Dover Lane Music Conference in Kolkata in 2017

Soumik Kundu

There were other adventures with film songs, *ghazals* and Sufi fusion, and work with jazz maestro Louis Banks. But his heart was in singing classical *khyal*, his forte especially the slow tempo. To see him in recital was to be transported to a princely court a century or two ago. The critic Suanshu Khurana this week identified his key song as 'Yaad Piya Ki Aaye', the *dadra*-style grief lament popularised by Bade Ghulam Ali Khan. '*The memories of my beloved haunt me*,' go the words, and many feel the same right now.

OLIVER CRASKE

And farewell to...

BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH (1958-2023): after establishing himself as a poet in the early 1980s, Zephaniah's creativity and his passion to be heard and understood knew no limits. He regularly appeared on TV, as an actor and important voice, he wrote novels, advised politicians, recorded music, and so much more. He was a British cultural icon. And he featured in *Songlines* on a number of occasions: we reviewed his albums, profiled him twice for our My World feature (a rare accolade), he presented an award at the *Songlines Music Awards* 2018 and we celebrated his appearance on The Imagined Village's debut album in 2007. We will miss his thoughtfulness deeply. Here's a quote from our 2007 interview with Zephaniah: *'For me, music does two really important things. The first is to turn people on politically – and by this I really mean anti-politically – getting people to open up to addressing real issues. I was round a friend's house once and I heard Bob Dylan's 'Hurricane', about a Black boxer wrongly imprisoned. It woke me up to the political situation for Black people in the US. The second thing music can do is to touch people. I want music – whoever is singing it – be they Rasta, Buddhist or Sikh, to talk to you in a place which isn't physical. Anyone can talk about booty. But to really sing and talk to you in a place that can't be measured – this is truly special.'*... **CARLOS LYRA** (1933-2023): the Brazilian singer and composer worked with Antonio Carlos Jobim, Vinicius de Moraes and Ronaldo Bôscoli and established himself as one of *bossa nova*'s first wave of songwriters when Sylvia Telles and then João Gilberto recorded his songs in the 50s and 60s. He continued recording sporadically thereafter, and in 2023 artists including Gilberto Gil, Caetano Veloso, Marcos Valle and Joyce Moreno recorded a tribute album to celebrate his 90th birthday... **RUY MINGAS** (1939-2024): Angola's Mingas released three albums in the 1970s that included lyrics based on poems by nationalist politicians (Viriato da Cruz, Mário António, Agostinho Neto) as well as composing the music for the Angolan national anthem, 'Angola Avante'. From the 80s onwards he focused on his work as a politician, diplomat and businessman.

Zephaniah at the *Songlines Music Awards* in 2018

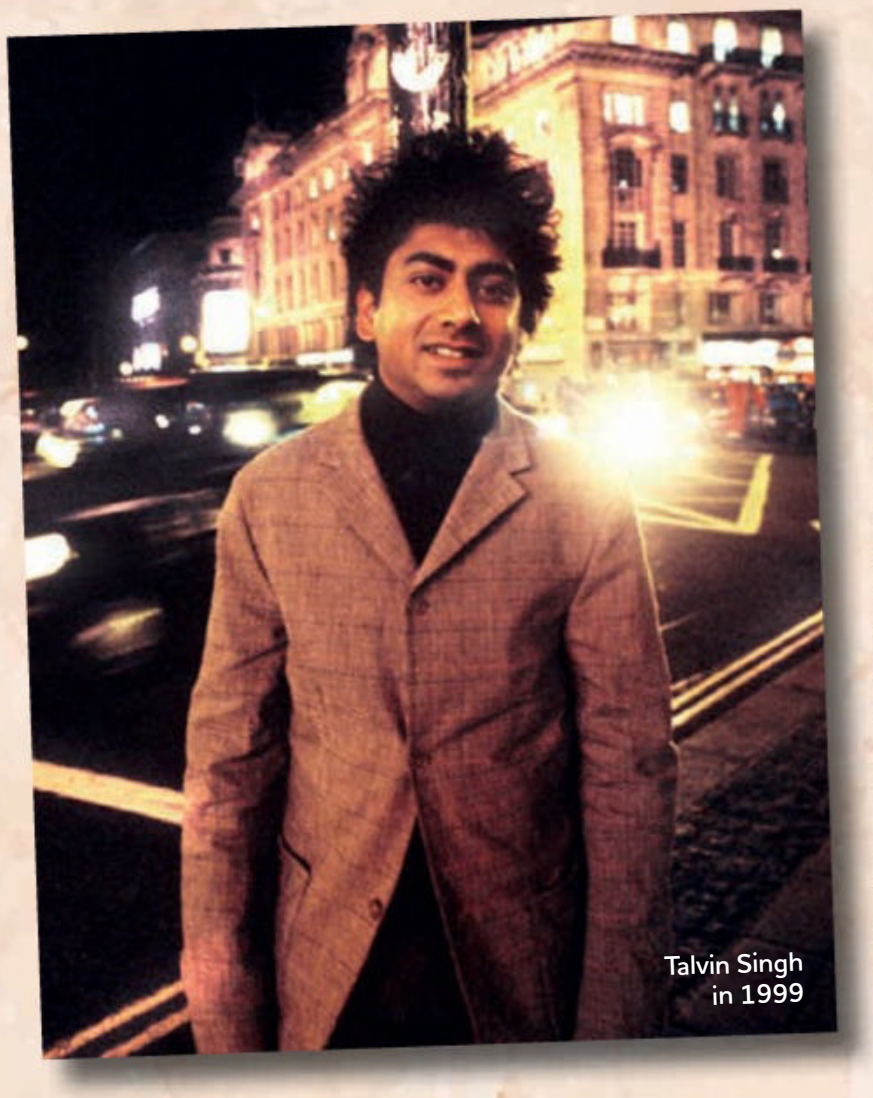
Tom Askew-Miller

25 years of SONGLINES

Songlines scribes and friends take a trip down memory lane to capture the albums, events, artists and stories that have left an indelible imprint. From festivals in war-torn deserts to Valentine's Day specials through impossible-to-imagine collaborations, surprise reunions and the emergence of essential new voices, these are just a few highlights from the life of *Songlines*.

1999

Generation Next! The UK's South Asian diaspora gets heard



Talvin Singh in 1999

Colston Julian, Outcaste Records

The year that the Asian underground went overground, 1999 saw Talvin Singh win the Mercury Music Prize for *OK* and Nitin Sawhney release his influential *Beyond Skin*. It was also the year that British-Asian musician Jason Singh started Nashini, a new club night in Manchester. "It was all artists from the South Asian diaspora, you know?" he remembers about those early line-ups. "We had poets, MCs, graffiti artists. It was all about politics and coming from South Asian communities where caste and class was important." Jason knew the UK's South Asian music scene well: he grew up in Tower Hamlets in London and would spend all the time he could in a local youth centre where future members of Osmani Soundz and Asian Dub Foundation were making beats on Commodore Amigas and Ataris. One of his youth workers also happened to

be Sam Zaman (aka State of Bengal) who a few years later would be the DJ beating heart of Talvin Singh's Anokha club night at The Blue Note in Hoxton.

In 1993 Jason moved to Manchester with his mum and siblings: "Club nights and DJing had just sort of took off in Manchester. And then I would see these things in magazines like *2nd Generation*, which was like *The Face* for the South Asian diaspora. All of a sudden you started to see and hear all these kinds of beats coming out of London, Birmingham, the north-west, places like Rochdale, Oldham, parts of Bradford, Leeds, and it was different." He also started doing promo work for Nitin Sawhney's Outcaste Records: "It was only an independent label at that time, but they were really keen to do stuff in the north. We would do these weird campaigns where I was getting sent cassettes and stuff from Outcaste and we would literally go around with flyers in a bag and give people cassettes. There was this mix of Nitin Sawhney's *Beyond Skin* on a cassette. People were like, 'wow, what is this?'"

Nitin Sawhney promo shot for *Beyond Skin*

For his generation, the release of Talvin Singh's *OK*, which came after years of the UK's South Asian diaspora carving a space in the country's nightlife, was a revelation. "It spoke to a generation of young people who were into technology, drum machines, who knew about synthesizers and music production, and also grew up with these different worlds of music. Nothing has touched *OK*, nothing has touched that album sonically and creatively, and I've met all the people who played on that album, it was a sum of its parts."

"Now, Nitin's audiences were different," he continues. "They were the people who were already into jazz, there was the Indian classical sort of folk music stuff. When you heard flamenco and *tabla*, that was just like 'wow!'. You're hearing this Indian guy, he had a beatboxer, he was programming drums, but it felt more sophisticated, in contrast to the raw edge that Talvin was bringing. That spoke to a wider audience of electronic and acoustic listeners."

And what about the 'Asian underground' term that got attached to all this music? "It was a term that a lot of people weren't really comfortable with, because it wasn't a term that came out of South Asian communities, it was a phrase that was coined for them. Everybody rode the 'Asian underground' wave because it did something, it was a catalyst, but it became a dirty word after a while, it became derogatory." *RUSS SLATER JOHNSON*

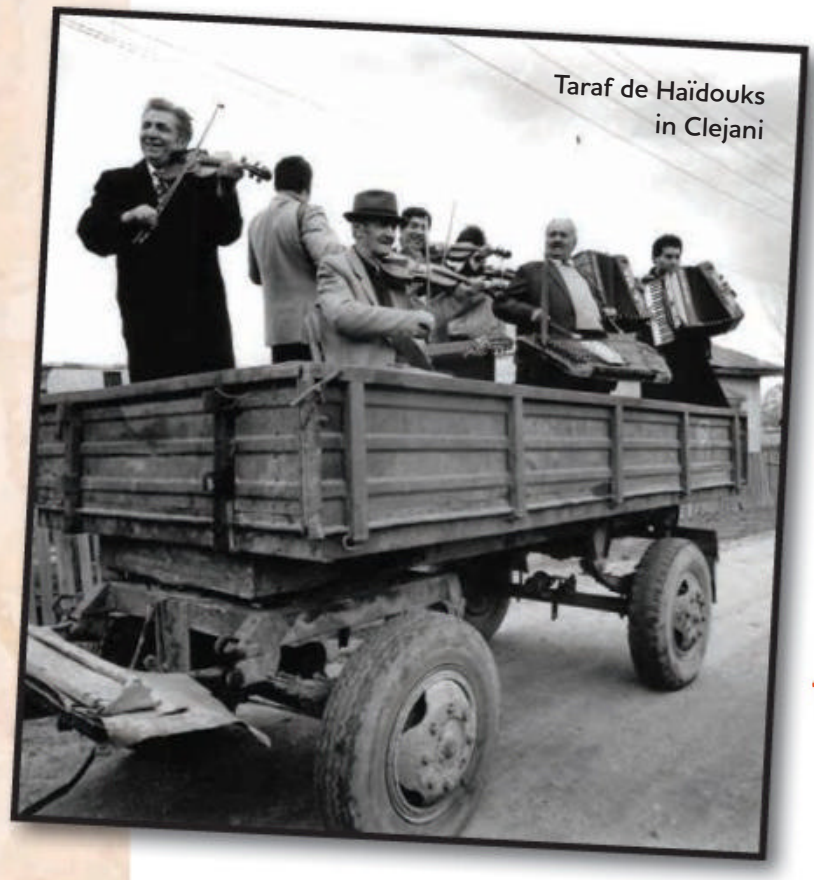
2000

Taraf de Haïdouks fight prejudice to be crowned the people's champions

The art-deco Arcub Hall in Bucharest was buzzing in December 2000 as Romania's most famous Gypsy band, Taraf de Haïdouks, met with North Macedonia's Kočani Orkestar. Furious fiddles, rattling *cimbalom* and plaintive vocals met punchy Balkan brass. The strange thing was that, while the Taraf had played large concert halls around Europe and America, this was their first performance in the Romanian capital, despite their home village of Clejani being only 40km away. Basically, Romania has never appreciated their musical ambassadors being a ragged Roma Gypsy band. This concert followed a presidential election in which the extreme nationalist candidate Corneliu Vadim Tudor didn't win, coming second with 28% of the vote. In an election promise made in 1997 Tudor has been quoted as saying: *'[I will] isolate the Roma criminals in special colonies [in order to] stop the transformation of Romania into a Gypsy camp.'*

By 2000, the Taraf de Haïdouks were the best-known band from Romania. They were 'discovered' by Romanian musicologist Speranța Rădulescu, who organised an Ocora recording and concerts in Switzerland and France while Romania was still under the communist dictatorship of Nicolae Ceauşescu. Come the 1989 revolution, Michael Winter and the late Stéphane Karo set off driving from Belgium to find them, sign them and name them Taraf de Haïdouks. Of their eight albums for Crammed Discs, *Band of Gypsies*, the live recording from the Bucharest concert is, I think, their best.

The old guard among the group were the gems with their soulful playing, primarily the gap-toothed fiddler Nicolae Neacşu, and the younger Gheorghe 'Caliu' Anghel, like Paganini at 1,000 volts. The sheer pace of 'The Return of the Magic Horses (Intoarcerea Cailor Magica)' with its cimbalom, fiddles and flute is breathtaking. Interest in the region was on the up – with the Balkan bands of Romania, Serbia and Macedonia, like Kočani Orkestar, fuelling a decade-long party. It was as if this amazing concert lit a fuse which kept on burning till only a few of the veterans were left. *SIMON BROUGHTON*



Taraf de Haïdouks in Clejani

Masataka Ishida

+ LISTEN *'Carolina (feat Kočani Orkestar)' by Taraf de Haïdouks appears on this issue's covermount CD, track 16*

2001

Hijacked equipment, roasted goat and a surprise cameo from Mali's prime minister. It can only be the first-ever **Festival au Désert**

Above: the Festival au Désert's typical layout; Below: Tinariwen at the festival in 2003

Machine guns, sword-wielding Touareg warriors and armed bandits hijacking the PA – the first Festival au Désert in Mali deep in the Sahel set new standards in intrepid travel by *Songlines* reporters in search of the world's finest music.

To reach the festival site on the remote desert plateau of In-Amadjel involved taking the once-a-week flight from Paris to Gao, a dusty speck of a town on the Niger river, climbing in a battered 4x4 and heading east across the desert and some of the most inhospitable, and yet strangely beautiful, terrain on earth.

There were no roads and often not even a track – only endless miles of sand and rock. In the course of a two-day journey, we passed just four villages, two of them abandoned and left in ruins by the Malian army during 1994's guerrilla war. Seven years later an uneasy truce prevailed, but the desert air still crackled with tension. The region had only just opened up to tourists and when the Malian prime minister's convoy passed us at speed, it was alarmingly guarded by two jeeps with mounted machine guns.

We soon learnt why when we eventually arrived at the festival site. Three days earlier, the PA system, flown in by French band Lo'Jo (whose idea the festival was), had been seized by bandits. It took hours of fraught negotiations and an exchange of money before the equipment was returned.

There was a tiny stage and a generator, but little else. The only thing on the menu was goat, freshly slaughtered before our eyes and roasted over an open fire. Temperatures went from baking by day to freezing at night, but we bedded down in the sand, bundled into our sleeping bags under the stars.

Slowly the site filled. There were fewer than 100 Europeans in attendance, but eventually there was an audience of around 500, including a platoon of armed soldiers, which told us that the Malian PM had arrived. Then dramatically, 100 and more proud Touareg warriors appeared on the horizon, mounted on camels with swords dangling from their waists. They had come from nomadic encampments all over the desert for their first experience of a rock festival.

The proceedings commenced under a total eclipse as the full moon rose over the wind-sculpted dunes. The prime minister made a speech and Lo'Jo took the stage to play an engaging set of Gallic global-pop. They were followed by Tinariwen, at this stage still totally unknown beyond their own domestic audience. The sound of their raw and earthy rebel songs would soon become familiar, but this first exposure to their hypnotic rhythms is a moment those of us who witnessed it will never forget.

By the second day the prime minister had left and, thankfully, so had most of his gunmen. Super Onze, another Touareg guitar band, played a magnificent set that contained some of the funkiest rhythms James Brown never invented. By the third and final night, it was touch and go whether the generator would hold out. It did, and Justin Adams played a blues-laden set of songs from his then-recent solo album, the appropriately-titled *Desert Road*.

When we left we were forced to change our route because fighting had broken out between local tribes and part of the region was under martial law.

In years to come Tinariwen would play the world's most prestigious rock festivals from Glastonbury to Coachella – but nothing could match that performance under the stars at the very first Festival au Désert. *NIGEL WILLIAMSON*

René Goiffon; Simon Broughton

2002

Senegalese comeback kings **Orchestra Baobab** return to the top table

Concert banner for St Louis show; Below: Orchestra Baobab in the 1970s

Simon Broughton: Dakar Sound

In his *Songlines* review of *Specialist in All Styles*, Robin Denselow wrote *'this, surely, is one of the greatest African comeback albums of all time.'* And over 20 years later it's hard to disagree. That the band has recently celebrated their 50th anniversary and performs regularly at La Mer à Table on the beach in Dakar, as well as concerts around the world, is extraordinary.

Orchestra Baobab were one of the most successful bands in Senegal. They started when the swanky Baobab Club opened in 1970 with singers Balla Sidibé, Rudy Gomis and Laye Mboup. Key instrumentalists were guitarist Barthélémy Attisso and tenor saxophonist Issa Cissokho. "The Baobab Club was like Mecca," guitarist Latfi Benjelloun tells me. "Lots of people want to go to Mecca, but very few can." The club closed in 1979, but Baobab's laid-back Cuban-influenced style had become big in West Africa and they were invited for state occasions in Senegal and Guinea by music-loving president Sekou Touré. One of their many albums, *Ken Dou Werente*, recorded in 1982, became a surprise hit once it reached France and Western Europe. The band dissolved as Youssou N'Dour's more street-wise *mbalax* style became the craze. The musicians went to work elsewhere and Attisso went back to his legal career in Togo, never admitting he'd been a musician.

World Circuit's Nick Gold, who released the hugely successful *Buena Vista Social Club* in 1996, encountered *Ken Dou Werente* in the 1980s. "That was one of the very first records of African music I'd heard. A blue LP cover with Orchestre Baobab written on the front. A friend of mine bought it in Paris and made me a cassette, which I had on rotation endlessly."

World Circuit released it as *Pirates Choice* in 1989, but the idea of reforming the band came later. "I got an address for Balla Sidibé," says Gold, "and wrote him a letter. He wrote back and we started talking about the idea of getting the band together again. Youssou was working with then BBC television producer, now writer, Jenny Cathcart in Dakar and they got some musicians together and did some sessions." The tricky one was guitarist Barthélémy Attisso, who'd sold his guitar and was now working as a lawyer. His spacey guitar sound was a defining Baobab characteristic. Once they'd tracked him down, Gold sent him a Les Paul guitar and Attiso found that his fingers remembered the music pretty well. "I was open-mouthed when I finally got to see them at New Morning in Paris," says Gold. "There was this Rolls Royce rhythm section bursting with personality, plus four different lead singers."

I saw them at their reunion concert in Saint-Louis, Senegal in June 2002. It was a sensational evening – with the meticulous Attisso on electric guitar and the flamboyant Issa Cissokho on sax as the two standout characters. They've since done hundreds of concerts round the world, though most of the leading names have now passed on – Cissokho and Attisso, Balla Sidibé, Rudy Gomis and others. "There are so many changes now," says Gold, who was at their (COVID-delayed) 50th anniversary bash in Dakar last year "but the amazing thing is that they still sound like Orchestra Baobab. It's like when you have a car and replace the original parts but these [new pieces] still preserve this beautifully purring engine." *SIMON BROUGHTON*

2003

A one-off show in Paris leads to the arrival of an important new Maghreb voice

In Algeria, Souad Massi was infamous as the lead singer of the rock band Atakor. During the Algerian Civil War they were vilified for their politicised lyrics, with Massi getting particular attention – it was not common for a woman to be a singer, never mind in a rock band. She tried to disguise herself as a man, then came anonymous death threats. Things changed in 1999 when she was invited to perform solo at a concert in Paris, a show that singlehandedly started her solo career. Her debut album *Raoui* arrived in 2001 and made her a star in France. *Deb*, which arrived in 2003, made her a star globally. "*Deb* was the vision of my past from afar, as if I was in a car moving forward but looking in my rear-view mirror seeing what was behind without ever stopping," remembers Massi. "I had the ambition with this album to create a musical link between the Maghrebian and Western worlds." As well as playing in Atakor, Massi had played in flamenco bands in Algeria, and she brought all these influences together: 'Ya Kelbi' had a beautiful Arabic melody caressed by cello, 'Bel el Madhi' featured *oud* but had a sprightly pop flicker, 'Ghir Enta' let the flamenco loose and 'Yawlidi' grooved with *soukous* guitar. "I was born into a family of music-lovers where musical curiosity was omnipresent," says Massi. "To this day I have a particular way of recording my songs – it's like translating a momentaneous energy into music." It was also apparent that Massi's confidence in her voice was growing. "Seeing *Raoui* receive a gold disc really reassured me," she says now, "so on *Deb* my voice might seem less shy and freer." And why does she think the album is so loved? "*Deb* was the moment I put down my roots as an artist. People felt the transformation I put into my work, they felt the energy and the freedom and liberation. Deb opened a door which led me to see the world through new eyes." *RUSS SLATER JOHNSON*

Massi circa *Deb*

+ LISTEN *'Yawlidi' is on this issue's covermount CD, track 11*

2004

Lhasa's ambitions for musical minutiae birth an ageless classic

Some albums never leave you. They creep up the wall of your sub-conscious and stick there like melancholy ivy. *The Living Road* by Mexican-American composer Lhasa is such a record. Named one of the ten best world music albums of the noughties by *The Times*, the album was as close to cinematic magic realism as you could get. And for good reason, as Lhasa confided to me shortly after its release: "We talked about that a lot when making the album, about making each song be a small film. We worked very visually because I don't read or write music and my language is very visual." 20 years later, Montréal producer, multi-instrumentalist and close friend Jean Massicotte concurs: "Along with co-producer François Lalonde, we tried to make a movie, only with no visuals. We infused the 12 songs with 12 soundtracks, like travelling along a road. It was more about creating a mood than about specifics." Out of this exploration came songs in three languages steeped in the imagery of fairy tales, shrouded by the Mexican *rancheras* and Balkan melodies Lhasa had picked up during her restless travels.

But also, imbued with loneliness. I can't remember another musician I interviewed in my 30 years as a music journalist who exposed her inner struggles so bluntly: "Success is hard to live with. You work for years and years and then it happens. And that's very scary. Trying to learn to be happy. The hardest thing for me isn't the outside pressure, it's what's inside, my own perfectionism, doubts and fears about myself." Lhasa struggled to stay still: "Movement is a question of survival. Moving on this road comes from a feeling of extreme rootlessness. I don't look back to see how far I've come, though my body is bending."

This restlessness was accompanied by a generosity that had a huge impact on a musician just beginning his own road towards a glittering career, Franco-Lebanese maestro Ibrahim Maalouf. "I was 22 when she invited me to join her in Montréal to record some trumpet solos for *The Living Road*," he recalls. "I was immediately dazzled by her incredible ability to creolise music. I'd never come across anything like it. She guided me like an older sister, gave me all the latitude I wanted, I felt so free when we played together." Another, more personal note, linked the two artists: "I know she had great affection for my original homeland, Lebanon. Her great-grandfather was from there, she relived his exile: France, Mexico and then onto the US." In our 2003 interview, Lhasa told me she had lived for three years with her grandfather's ghost in the streets of Marseille: "He arrived there as a stowaway. I wrote a song for him ['J'arrive à la Ville'] on *The Living Road* which tries to understand what pushes people like him and millions of others to leave everything behind, empty handed." Meanwhile, Lhasa's spiritual voyages through music from elsewhere fascinated and influenced her approach: "Sounds from Ethiopia, Albania, artists like Anouar Brahem and Amália Rodrigues... they come from a world where music still has shamanic magical powers, where people are not afraid of expressing incredibly profound emotions. And that's very humbling for me."

Two decades later, it's chilling to listen to the 12 tracks. Lhasa died in 2010, aged 37. Death and rebirth haunt the lyrics in songs like 'Soon this Space Will be too Small': *'I'll die three times / And be born again / In a little box / With a golden key / And a flying fish / Will set me free.'* For Massicotte, *The Living Road* remains ageless: "I listen to the album all the time. I'll always remember how she talked about her little songs and her little shows. She just wanted to take little steps to build something grand, to show the beauty of the world. But she did it with all her soul, her entire body, layer by layer." Ibrahim Maalouf also insists on her delicacy: "She was very sensitive. She radiated a unique form of gentleness, always wearing a fond smile. And she showed incredible wellbeing for those around her. Lhasa left us too early, I miss her terribly." *DANIEL BROWN*

Christophe Beauregard

2005

Moon Lighting: Ali and Toumani shine in Brussels

The concert of Ali Farka Touré and Toumani Diabaté at the Bozar in Brussels on January 29, 2005, would be the first to feature the two of them, premiering their forthcoming album of duets, *In the Heart of the Moon*, that had been recorded the previous year in a room overlooking the Niger at the Hotel Mandé in Bamako.

Before that evening's concert, Ali and Toumani sat in a conference room at the Bozar, performing some of their new songs on guitar and *kora* for the assembled music press. This new music drew on a repertoire taken from the popular music of the 1950s and 1960s – the *jamana kura* (new-age) music of the Malian independence movement – as well as Mande, Sonrai and Dogon pieces, some dating back to the 17th-century Bamana Empire. They played, spell-bindingly, then questions were taken.

I'd had my own question time with Ali at his hotel earlier that day. A small meeting room, Ali at the head of the table, chain-smoking cigarettes, while a young French woman translated for me, Ali dispensing gnomic answers with authoritative force. He told me about the music he wouldn't play: "When you know how to communicate with the spirits," he revealed to me, "you need to know how to make that particular music to get in touch with them. And there are some elements of that music that are completely secret."

The previous evening, we'd gathered at a Senegalese restaurant in central Brussels, L'Horloge du Sud. A party of 20, Ali at the head of the table of musicians, future star Bassekou Kouyate among them, banging out rhythms with their cutlery as the food came. I recall turning to Ali, resplendent in African dress, as he smoked another of his innumerable cigarettes all the way down to its root. But instead of stubbing it out, with a mischievous glance towards me, the only one bothering to look, he swallowed the still-lit cigarette, and then it appeared again between his lips, the tip still burning. Nice trick. He smiled to himself. Another miraculous skill in his arsenal. "If you've got a scorpion in your mouth, you better know where to put your tongue," he'd tell me during our interview session the next day.

On stage at the Bozar, and when they played London's Barbican in July that year, Ali was in command, whether strapping on his black electric guitar and taking centre-stage for an elemental storm of Malian blues, duelling with Kouyate's *ngoni*, and the tides of rhythm from the congas and calabash, or sat with Toumani at the foot of the stage to premiere music that would, later that summer, appear on their Grammy Award-winning album, spinning threads of musical silver and gold. Ali's guitar lay down delicate footprints for Toumani's kora to weave in and out of.

"I literally have to throw up what's inside," Ali would tell me later of his music-making. "What I do, and the music I do, I do it with spirituality. You see me now, talking, and when you see me on stage, that spirit kicks in and I become someone different. For you to get it, I have to be convinced first in what I do, and then I can pass it on, and that's my philosophy. What's important is to convince the audience, and to give them pleasure, and you can only do that on stage, in performance, and when the concert is finished, all that disappears."

Ali may be gone, but the three hours of music he made on stage together with Toumani at the Bozar is still here; hopefully, one day, World Circuit, or some other label, will issue it. *TIM CUMMING*

Youri Lenquette

(L-R): Duquende, Ali Faiz Ali, Miguel Poveda

Lhasa's ambitions for musical minutiae births an ageless classic

2006

East meets West as the worlds of *qawwali* and **flamenco** find electrifying frisson

Qawwali Flamenco debuted as a live performance in Barcelona in 2003, before an album in 2006. The project brought together three of the greatest contemporary exponents of two traditions, the Pakistani *qawwali* singer Faiz Ali Faiz and the Spanish flamenco singers Duquende and Miguel Poveda, as well as a fine array of supporting musicians including flamenco guitarist Chicuelo. On the face of it, it's an unprecedented collaboration, but it did not arrive out of the blue. By the time of his death in 1997, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan had done much to bring qawwali to a global audience. While in Spain, flamenco had undergone a renaissance after the death of Franco, especially with the *nuevo flamenco* movement, and by the early 2000s stars such as Enrique Morente and Carmen Linares were international names. At the same time, musicians from South Asia were seeking out new areas for musical collaboration, especially within the Mediterranean. The early 2000s saw the arrival of the *Greeks & Indians* series of recordings (featuring Rakesh Chaurasia, Ross Daly and others), and with hindsight a musical meeting of the traditions of South Asia and Spain seems to have been almost inevitable. The two traditions have an uncanny similarity in their power, raw emotion and spirituality: Flamenco has *duende*, an almost frightening exposure of the depths of the soul, while qawwali is driven by the idea of *mast*, or being intoxicated by the divine. *Qawwali Flamenco* largely divides itself between the two musical forms, allowing contrasts and similarities to emerge from the styles being placed side-by-side. On a small number of tracks such as 'Tere 'ishq ne nacaia / con esa morena' the musicians come together and the synergy between the traditions is truly electrifying. Speaking on the project, Faiz tells us, "It was difficult at first, but I like to be challenged. The flamenco singing style sounds similar to Rajasthani music and there are lots of similar rhythmic patterns. And Chicuelo, particularly, got our music." As a nice coda, in 2023 Faiz, Chicuelo and others played together again for the first time since 2015. *MARIA LORD*

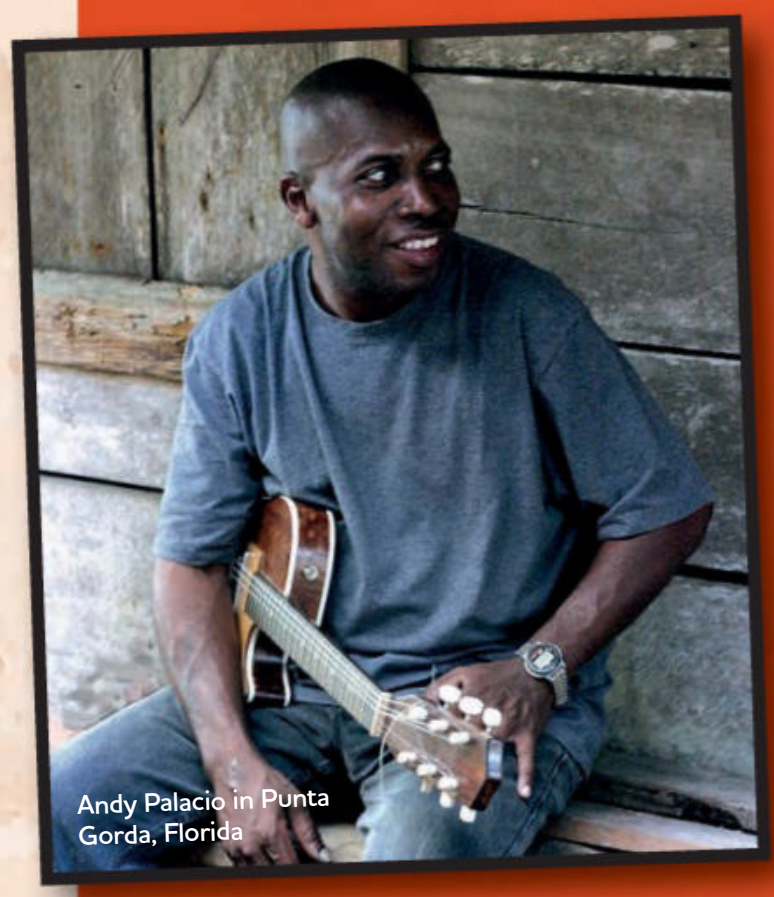
Catherine-De Clippel

2007

Ivan Durán reminisces about the 'ambassador of *punta* rock' and the revival of *paranda*!

I remember the day I met Andy Palacio. He was sitting at the Bellevue bar in Belize City. It was 1993. I was only 21 and had just started to make recordings. He already had a couple of *punta* rock hits under his belt and was a star on the local airwaves, yet I remember him being very friendly and easy going. I was studying music in Havana, Cuba and was eager to return to Belize to record Belizean music. I admired Andy not so much for his popularity and his dancefloor hits but for what he had done on Sunrise Records. I used to buy all the cassettes they released; it was an inspiring grassroots effort to record and document Belizean roots music in all its manifestations, from *mestizo* marimba music to Garifuna drumming and singing to Creole folk songs. They had a makeshift studio in a room at the Arts Council building using a four-track Tascam cassette recorder he had brought from the UK.

We recorded our first project together, *Keimoun (Beat On)*, between 1993 and 1994 in Havana and Belize with some of the best musicians from my school (Escuela Nacional de Música) and



Andy Palacio in Punta Gorda, Florida

Garifuna singers and drummers from Belize. It was a wild experiment with lots of new arrangements that were not common in Garifuna and Belizean music, heavily influenced by Afro-Cuban and West African Jazz. Andy was not afraid to experiment, he loved Youssou N'Dour, Salif Keita and King Sunny Ade's music but he always insisted that the singing and the drumming were 100% Garifuna. He knew that the music had to evolve to be able to attract audiences beyond the region, but it was important not to compromise the roots. Yet he was heavily criticised in Belize when *Keimoun* was released. The radio wouldn't play it and it was dismissed as a 'foreign experiment.' I remember it was hard for Andy. On the one hand he was proud the international press was talking notice but, on the streets, his core punta rock fans were disappointed. Our next collaboration was the *Paranda* (2000) compilation where we recorded several elder *paranderos* from Belize, Guatemala and Honduras. Andy and Aurelio Martinez became very good friends during the project and together laid the foundation for the revival of *paranda* music. Thanks to them, paranda is as popular today as punta rock.

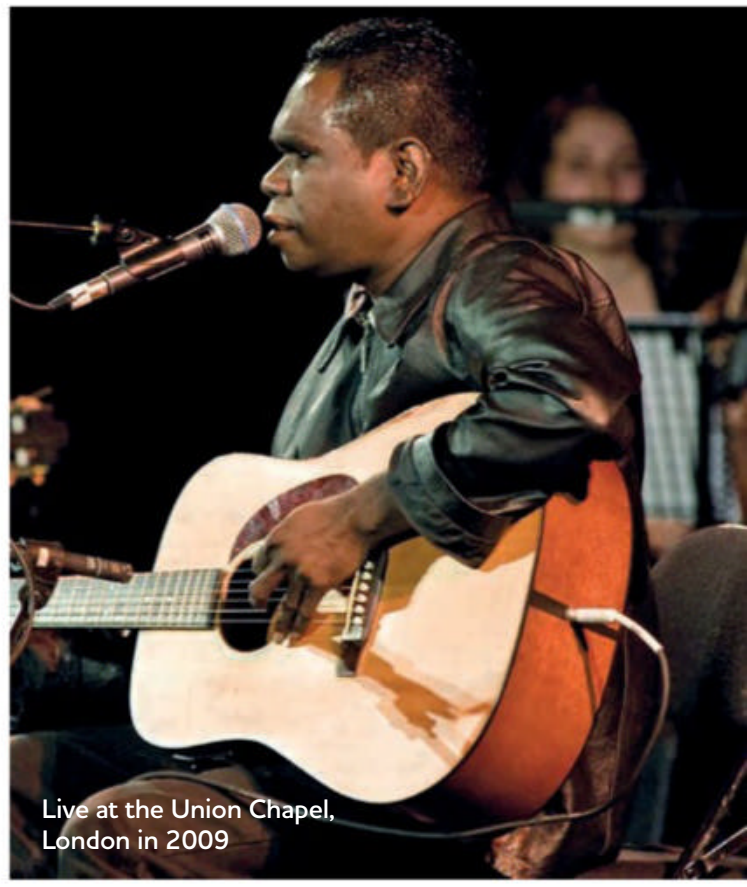
Wátina was our vision for the evolution of paranda music, rooted in tradition but with an open musical spirit. It took almost four years to finish, it was a collective effort of over a dozen musicians, singers and composers. It was not easy, I struggled to hit the right balance. I was afraid of making the same 'mistakes' as on *Keimoun*. One day walking on the beach with [British radio DJ] Charlie Gillett in Placencia (Southern Belize), he told me that the *Wátina* tracks I had sent him were okay but far from great. He almost sounded disappointed in me! Driving back home that evening I felt like abandoning the project! It took me a few years to fully appreciate what Charlie's words did to me that day. He pushed me to make music without borders.

It was an unusual album coming out of Central America, new music that was hard to pinpoint but that felt familiar yet intriguing. I love it when music makes you discover a world unknown to you. *Wátina* did that to many people around the world. Andy was a teacher and a dreamer, and inspired a whole generation to be proud of being Garifuna. He believed in the power of music to lift his culture and I believe he succeeded. *IVAN DURÁN*

Katia Paradis

2008

The doctor calls



Live at the Union Chapel, London in 2009

JL Photography

Never mind the fact that Dr G Yunupingu was blind, or that his totem was the saltwater crocodile, or that he played a normal right-handed guitar upside down. The most extraordinary thing about the Indigenous Australian megastar – who died on July 25, 2017, aged 46 – was his voice. Lilting, tender, tinged with sadness and sweetness and hope, it melted the hardest of hearts, and dazzled with a power that felt celestial.

It was the voice of the world's oldest living culture, where kinship, community and country is everything. Gurrumul – also referred to since his death as Dr G Yunupingu – was an unassuming man from the Yolngu people of Elcho Island in Australia's Top End, a singer-songwriter and former Yothu Yindi band member, who became a global phenomenon.

He collaborated with Sting, performed for the Queen and sang for US president Barack Obama in Darwin. He toured Australia and gave concerts in London, New York and Europe. I interviewed him in a chilly Berlin in 2011, the year he released his bestselling second solo album, *Rrakala*.

Or rather, I attempted to interview him. In the same way that his live shows had heightened his mystique – between song he would sit silently, his white eyes profound and confronting – he wasn't given to chat. "I don't think the media had ever encountered an A-list artist so reluctant to engage," remembers Mark Grose, co-founder of Darwin record label Skinnyfish. "He'd sit there silently, unresponsive to questions. He felt the music was more important than anything he could say. But he showed the world the beauty and depth in First Nations culture."

Asked a direct question, he'd ignore me. His quiet self-containment meant he was subject to projection; he was held up as a soothsayer, a conduit for old traditions, a saint-like figure of redemption in a country with historically appalling treatment of its Indigenous population. But having spent the day in his company, with his then girlfriend Bronwyn Gurruwiwi and his spokesperson and double bass player Michael Hohnen, a playful side was evident. There was an impersonation of Bob Dylan, with whom he'd shared a stage.

There was laughter, and a visit to a giant film and music store, where he stood at a listening station vibing to his self-titled platinum-selling 2008 debut and to *Rrakala*, listening to himself play guitar, piano and drums and sing songs, sometimes in English, most often in Gumatj, telling of tuna fish riding the waves, of the north wind, of clouds forming and currents swirling; metaphors for the kinship patterns that exist within a system where decisions are taken collectively and *balanda* (non-Aboriginals) who spend time with the Yolngu (including Hohnen, Grose and Grose's healthcare worker partner, Michelle Dowden) are family.

We helped him pick out kung-fu movies (he liked films that made Bronwyn jump) and CDs to replace those that regularly went missing on Elcho. The latter was where his heart was. His phone rang with news from home; on one call the sounds of didgeridoo, clapsticks and high mournful singing could be heard – a funeral ceremony for one of his aunts. It was to Elcho, where he started out singing in the Methodist mission choir and learned music by hitting cans with sticks, that Gurrumul always returned, and where he stayed after the chronic kidney-related disease that saw him cancel his 2010 US tour came back, following the 2015 release of *The Gospel Album*, a set of church songs from his childhood.

There was 2018's posthumous *Djamirri: Child of the Rainbow*, a documentary *Gurrumul*, and a few ARIA awards accepted by his daughter, Jasmine. "It was always about the music, never about him," says Grose. "We miss him terribly." *JANE CORNWELL*

Live at the Royal Festival Hall, Valentine's Day 2009

2009

Dirty weekends, free improv and Coleridge covers as **Bellowhead** takeover

Strange to think of folk's perennially favourite big band Bellowhead as once being deemed one of '*the new kids on the folk block*' (as we described them in *Songlines* #37). Their debut *Burlesque* was given a five-star review and called '*the most important album of English traditional music since Fairport Convention's Liege & Lief.*'

One year later they were announced as 'Band in Residence' at the newly reopened Southbank Centre and 18-year-old Sam Sweeney became the newest recruit – on fiddle and bagpipes. By 2009 the band were fully ensconced at the SBC and did various shows including the anti-Valentine's event *Dirty Weekend*, which Jon Boden recalls featured: "a whole load of arrangements of the filthiest songs we could think of." They also did a rendition of 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' and a free improv concert, one Sweeney remembers being "utterly bizarre" and culminating in someone in the rapidly dwindling audience shouting "BOLLOCKS!" A personal highlight was their 2012 nautically-themed New Year's Eve extravaganza which transformed the SBC into HMS Bellowhead, complete with sparkling guests including Eliza Carthy who led an Abba *ceilidh*, and Jim Moray as a silent disco DJ. As the band's press officer Harriet Simms recalls, "that New Year's Eve represented something very special – they turned a big, serious space into a joyful and sequinned ship complete with unexpected musical delights."

It was, says Sweeney "a halcyon period because the band were about to go massive with *Hedonism*." That album, recorded at Abbey Road Studios the following year, propelled the band to another level and over the course of 12 years, they won eight BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards, recorded theme tunes for *The Archers* and *The Simpsons* and played Jools Holland's *Hootenanny* alongside Kylie Minogue and Toots Hibbert. As Simms says: "what set the band apart was that they embraced exuberant, theatrical silliness with consummate musicianship. A rare – and by some considered unfashionable – combination but they were, and still are, easily brilliant enough to carry it off." JO FROST

+ LIVE *Bellowhead have announced a 20th anniversary tour for November 2024, see bellowhead.co.uk for details*

Philip Ryalls

2010

Buena Vista's success may have stalled this one, but eventually an almighty group of **Malians and Cubans** got their chance

So many of the best things in life happen serendipitously. In 1996, World Circuit owner Nick Gold planned to fly a bunch of Malian musicians to Havana to record an album with a group of Cuban veterans. When the Malians failed to get their visas and were unable to travel, it seemed that it had all gone horribly wrong – except that in the end it turned out wonderfully right.

In the absence of the Africans, Gold and Ry Cooder, who had flown in from California to produce the project, used the studio time they had booked to record a hastily organised substitute album. The never-meant-to-be record they made became *Buena Vista Social Club* and turned into an improbable global phenomenon, selling eight million copies around the world and spawning a film by Wim Wenders.

Yet the original idea of an Afro-Cuban fusion never quite went away and 14 years later in 2010, Buena Vista survivor Eliades Ochoa and his Cuban backing band Grupo Patria finally got together with a group of Malian musicians which included original 1996 invitees: guitarist Djelimady Tounkara and *ngoni* player Bassekou Kouyate, plus *griot* singer Kassé Mady Diabaté, *balafon* player Lassana Diabaté and *kora* maestro Toumani Diabaté.

In the end, it was the musicians themselves who pushed to make it happen. Whenever Gold saw Ochoa in the intervening years, the Cuban would ask him, "When are we going to make that record we were going to do with the Africans?"

Quite independently, Toumani Diabaté had also befriended Ochoa after they met when both were playing a festival in Holland. They had jammed together back at their hotel and when Toumani suggested to World Circuit that they might make an album of kora and guitar duets, Gold had a better idea – rather than a duo record he proposed expanding the group and reviving the 1996 AfroCubism project.

Finding time in busy touring diaries was not easy but eventually the musicians came together for five days in a studio in Madrid. In the same spontaneous spirit of the *Buena Vista Social Club* sessions, 17 songs were recorded, with all the musicians playing 'live' in one large room and overdubs kept to a minimum.

"What I'd learnt from watching Ry when we recorded *Buena Vista* is that vibe is more important than anything," Gold said. "I picked up a lot about getting the musicians to play as an ensemble live in the studio and the ensemble playing on AfroCubism is fantastic."

A second session was convened a couple of months later, which produced a further nine songs. "After waiting so long, in the end

Christina Jaspars

Back: (L-R) Djelimady Tounkara and Eliades Ochoa stand on the far left; Front (L-R): Toumani Diabaté and Bassekou Kouyate

it came together incredibly quickly and easily," Gold remembers. "It felt as though the musicians had been holding back their ideas and energy for that moment."

The language barrier meant that translators were present in the studio but according to Ochoa were barely needed "because we communicated through our music and trusted each other."

The album, released in 2010, was a gem, its best moments coming from the creative tension between the tightly structured instincts of the Cuban musicians under the firm direction of Ochoa and the looser, more improvisational approach of the Malians. Even the standard 'Guantanamera', a song so over-familiar you'd imagined that you never wanted to hear another version, was reinvented with an exquisite elegance.

"I'm not playing Cuban music and the Cubans aren't playing African music. We've put the two together and made a new music," Toumani Diabaté told *Songlines* when we caught the group's first concert in the summer of 2010 at the La Mar de Músicas festival in the spectacular setting of Cartagena on Spain's Mediterranean coast. "*AfroCubism* is more than a fusion," Ochoa added. "I call it an explosion… It's the musical big bang."

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

2011

Finland's unruly **accordion iconoclast** teamed up with one of the world's most acclaimed string quartets for an explosion of primal energy

I first met Finland's wild-child accordionist Kimmo Pohjonen in Bracknell, South East England, in 2000. Sitting in the front row of the Wilde Theatre at South Hill Park Arts Centre I was mesmerised, terrified and completely in awe of how he and his instrument became one, marrying the most lyrical sounds with raw, dripping earthiness and fearless determination. Since then he's never failed to surprise: accordion wrestling, farm machinery music, music for ballet, film and theatre and the brilliant full-on collaboration with King Crimson's Trey Gunn and Pat Mastelotto (KTU).

That most elegant and adventurous of the world's string quartets, the Kronos Quartet, picked up on Pohjonen's dynamic and irreverent music and were keen to see what might happen if they teamed up with his traditional and classical heritage, his fearless improvisation and his creatively disruptive electronics, urged on by his musical sparring partner, sampling whizz and percussionist Samuli Kosminen.

The resulting *Uniko* was, as the title suggests, a unique partnership. The 2011 album revealed the fine art of what happens when musicians really listen to each other, and when they play and tease, torment and push instruments beyond boundaries. Seeing them live was definitely an 'I was there' moment when they ruled the Barbican one memorable night in 2013. The drama cascading from the stage took my breath away in an unforgettable, emotional, physical rollercoaster.

Pohjonen has described the music as "sometimes really ugly and nasty, but nasty can be nice too because I like nasty weather." It's like "going into an ice hole," he says, "going into warm water, into the sun, the darkness." The accordion sets a halo around the strings, the strings push and pull the accordion, the percussion and samples shift everything off the planet. "It's about dreams and life," says Pohjonen; for me it's that belief in grasping life that makes *Uniko* as powerful today as ever. *FIONA TALKINGTON*

Egídio Santos

2012

Tropical bombs at the ready as an all-star project changes the perception of Colombian music from within

Top: Markitos Micolta and Nidia Góngora at Hackney Empire, July 2012; Above: Quantic and Mario Galeano in Discos Fuentes studio, Medellín

At the start of 2012, a group of musicians, mainly Colombians but with one Brit as a notable exception, convened at Discos Fuentes recording studio in Medellín to record an iconic album. Mario Galeano had recently produced a record with his group Frente Cumbiero thanks to financial support from the British Council, and they were offering support again as they wanted one artist from each continent to perform at the London Olympics; they asked Galeano to represent South America. However, he had a counteroffer: "We told [them] that we would rather invest the money in recording a project," he remembers. "It was a big gamble for us because we could have earned a big chunk of money just doing the concert, but we decided it was much better to record." It was to be no ordinary album either. Galeano had already spoken to British producer Will 'Quantic' Holland, who was living in Colombia, about doing something together; they came up with *Ondatrópica*, which would be a constellation of musicians, some legendary, some on the cutting-edge. Fruko, Michi Sarmiento, Pedro 'Ramaya' Beltrán, Markitos Micolta, Juancho Vargas, Aníbal Velázquez… they may not have all been household names, but these musicians lit up Colombian music in the 60s and 70s, playing on countless classic *cumbia*, *descarga*, *son* and *porro* cuts. They were joined by contemporaries of Quantic and Galeano, like Pacific Coast singer Nidia Góngora and members of Sidestepper, Meridian Brothers and Frente Cumbiero. With an intergenerational, interracial line-up they explored the previous 50 years of Colombia's 'tropical music', while also bringing it bang up to date. 'Bomba Trópica' sizzled with a piano *tumbao*, 'Linda Mañana' was an irresistible cumbia, 'Donde Suena el Bombo' a fanfare trip to the Afro-Colombian coast, but there were also dashes of hip-hop, ska, distorted guitar and beatboxing that showed this was no revivalist project.

"It was a special thing", recalls Galeano. "Fuentes' studio was… a mystical place. All the different musicians started arriving and everyone had an anecdote. We were so excited to be recording with our heroes, and they were so excited to be back in Fuentes." Yet, the album attracted some criticism in Colombia. Though *Ondatrópica* got much support from *Shock* (Colombia's main music magazine), in *El Malpensante*, a cultural journal, it was lambasted as a '*heritage*' project. The journal wrote '*rather than a great catalogue of our rhythms played in a contemporary fashion, [Ondatrópica is] a sprinkling of quotes taken from what we previously called, for lack of a more specific name, tropical music*,' and that the album would only be '*historic*' once placed in a museum. Galeano replied in the next issue, stating the obvious: that so many contemporary genres are built from music that has existed for decades, if not longer, adding: '*the music that was made 50 years ago and the music that will be made 50 years from now are parts of the same artistic current.*' Galeano also noted the project's intentional intergenerational line-up, criticising the Colombian music industry for the fact that '*older musicians lack social and commercial status.*'

Ondatrópica performed at the BT River of Music festival as part of the London Olympics celebrations in the summer of 2012. It was one of few international shows that the group did, due to the cost of touring. But its legacy is strong, and has been a catalyst for Colombian music ever since. Just look at Discos Fuentes. "We asked Discos Fuentes to be part of the project… but they didn't see the potential," says Galeano. "They have a new direction now and they actually told me that they missed an opportunity." To celebrate their 90th anniversary, Fuentes have reassembled groups like Afrosound and Los Corraleros de Majagual. And Fruko is back with a new album, recorded with London's Classico Latino. "People are much more in tune with the names and the works of musicians, such as the ones that we recorded with in Fuentes," says Galeano. It's not easy being a Colombian music fan in Colombia, but Galeano and Holland have shown that it was worth the effort. *RUSS SLATER JOHNSON*

+ LISTEN *'Papi Shingaling' is on this issue's covermount CD, track 12*

BT

2013

A new musical **tour-de-force of Irish culture** emerges, becoming a beacon for the melding of tradition and modernity

Nominees for The Meteor Choice Prize for Irish Album of the Year in 2014 included U2, Sinéad O'Connor, Hozier and Aphex Twin. But Ireland's foremost music award went to a folk band, The Gloaming, for their self-titled first album, released the year prior. That was just the beginning: 'Samhradh Samhradh', the beautiful paean to summer that closes the album, won the BBC Radio 2 Folk Award for Best Traditional Track; later Iarla Ó Lionáird, whose voice had distilled that sunshine into sound, won RTÉ's Best Folk Singer Award; and fiddle player Caoimhin Ó Raghallaigh was nominated for Best Folk Instrumentalist.

The Gloaming is essentially an album of Irish traditional music – jigs, reels, Irish language songs. It's the approach to this material that makes it distinctive. In 2011 County Clare fiddle genius, Martin Hayes (All-Ireland champion six times before he was 19), brought together Chicago-born guitarist Dennis Cahill, with whom he'd worked for decades, with Ó Lionáird and Ó Raghallaigh, and New York-based pianist (and producer) Thomas Bartlett, as a musical experiment. It became a kind of alchemy, this multifarious combination turning to gold. The Gloaming went on to tour the world and release three acclaimed albums before '*taking a break*' in 2020.

In 2016 I spent a day with The Gloaming at the World Circuit studios, listening and watching while they recorded their second album. There, Hayes told me about his omnivorous musical habits: "I listen to everything," he said. "Everything."

The late Dennis Cahill loved the jazz of his home city. Iarla Ó Lionáird was brought up in an Irish speaking – and singing – family on a hilltop in West Cork, one of 12 children who learned songs from their mother (who learned them from hers). He is renowned for *sean-nós*, the tradition of unaccompanied Gaelic song. But Ó Lionáird was also the singer in the Afro Celt Sound System. Ó Raghallaigh plays the fiddle, 'but not,' as Spock might say, 'as you know it.'

"I'm a fiddler, my background is traditional music," Ó Raghallaigh says. "But I was drawn to the sound of an instrument that didn't exist. I tried all sorts of fiddles but I never found it until I got this beautiful instrument custom made for me in Norway. It's halfway between a Hardanger fiddle and a *viola d'amore*. I call it the *Hardanger d'amore*." It is a gorgeous instrument, with a flattened bridge and ten strings; five he strokes with a baroque bow while five beneath resonate. It gives a shimmer to the group's sound, a modern, abstract underpinning of Hayes' melodies and Ó Lionáird's singing.

Bartlett, wunderkind among these elders, was obsessed by Hayes' playing, even organising a concert for him – when he was 11. Bartlett studied classical piano with Maria Curcio, whose students included Radu Lupu and Mitsuko Uchida. He records as Doveman and has worked with assorted Wainwrights, David Byrne and Yoko Ono.

"Everybody in the band is a musical outlier in some way," Hayes tells me. "[No one] is what I would consider mainstream."

A highlight of the first album is 'Song 44'. Ó Lionáird sings an adaptation of a poem 800 years old. Bartlett mutes the piano strings with his hands and plays around the singing, while Ó Raghallaigh underpins the vocal with a drone. The song is ancient, the treatment absolutely contemporary. Even so, Cahill told me that for The Gloaming a session in the studio is not so distant from one in a bar. "We do have the pub session approach in that we rarely work out parts. We all know how the tune goes, and we do things around it... It could be chaotic, but it isn't."

There is a wonderful photograph [left] of The Gloaming in full flight. The musicians are indistinguishable, all a blur as they play frenziedly – as they come to do on *The Gloaming*'s 'Opening Set'. Getting on for 17-minutes long, it's a suite that sweeps through seven tunes: a song, then jigs and reels. Cahill's guitar is percussive, the fiddles dance, Bartlett syncopates, coming askance at the melodies. It is magnificent, exhilarating. The Clare fiddle tradition, Chicago jazz, Irish-language lyrical poetry, the Baroque and modernist music – all coalesce to create in *The Gloaming* a highly original and beautiful album.

Michael D Higgins, President of Ireland, made the first ever state visit to the United Kingdom in April 2014 and a celebration of Irish culture was held at the Royal Albert Hall. Elvis Costello played and Fiona Shaw read poems by Nobel Prize winner WB Yeats. Closing the show, at the specific request of President Higgins, were The Gloaming. Why? Because their original first album exemplified the way the country's traditional music is as important to Ireland's lively contemporary culture as is its famously innovative literature, theatre and cinema. *JULIAN MAY*

+ LISTEN *'Samhradh Samhradh' is on our CD, track 15*

Hugh McCabe

Bottom (L-R): Iarla Ó Lionáird, Thomas Bartlett, Caoimhín Ó Raghallaigh, Martin Hayes, Dennis Cahill

2014

Enter the ‘Anatolian dragon’

Barış Aktınmaz

“I was on the search for music I’d been wanting to hear for years,” says Turkish singer Gaye Su Akyol of her 2014 debut, *Develerle Yaşıyorum* (I Live With Camels). Recorded with Istanbul rock band Bubituzak, her groundbreaking album mixed traditional Turkish music with psychedelia and surf rock, providing the launchpad for Gaye Su Akyol to become one of Turkey’s most innovative and celebrated contemporary artists.

She describes her debut as “an alloy of Anatolian folk music, classical Turkish music, psychedelia and subgenres of rock – the imprints of a land with thousands of years of history, of Istanbul, came together with the rebellion of the present day.”

As a child, she absorbed her mother and grandmother’s love of classical Turkish music. “I started to memorise the music of a thousand years of tradition,” she says, “music that bares traces of Rome, Byzantine, the Ottoman Empire and all other cultures that inhabited Anatolia.” Stir into that amphora a bubbling glaze of 1960s and 70s psychedelia, Anatolian folk music, sci-fi, spaghetti western, Turkey’s *aşıks* minstrelry, Ennio Morricone and Nirvana, along with Bubituzak’s Ali Güçlü Şimşek by her side as co-producer and partner, and the resulting brew was a step-change for Turkish rock.

“It was one of the touchstone albums of that decade,” Akyol says of *Develerle Yaşıyorum*. “It dropped like a meteor amid the Turkish music industry, which at the time rarely released anything alternative and barely showed signs of living. And for me this album opened the doors of being the pioneer of a fresh yet deep-rooted and promising genre.”

It also led to her long association with the eclectic Glitterbeat label, which was then starting out. “We transformed each other, became international,” she says. “And through my music I found the power to create records that resonate across the globe. I’m incredibly thankful for all of this.” *TIM CUMMING*

2015

Traditions, generations and strings collide as the idea of a global village finds a home in Poland

How many musical worlds can fit onto just one record? With *Sun Celebration* Warsaw Village Band proved that there really are no limits. Let’s start with the various string instruments that appeared on this double record. There’s Warsaw Village Band’s own Sylwia Świątkowska on the *płock* (a Polish 16th-century knee fiddle), the grandmaster of Persian music Kayhan Kalhor on the *kamancheh*, Indian virtuoso Ustad Liaquat Ali Khan on the *sarangi* and the avant-garde viola player Michał Zaborski. In their hands, the instruments weep, shout and enchant with a sound paradoxically rough and smooth.

It was a partnership with Galician multi-instrumentalist Mercedes Peón in 2012 that launched the idea behind this album, galvanised by a number of performances that the band and Peón performed together in Poland. One story from the summer of 2014 stands out, with the collective performing together on the main stage of the Przystanek Woodstock festival. It is said that the event gathered an audience of 750,000 spectators, which remains the highest attendance for a music festival in Poland to this day. It is likely the biggest world music concert in the history of Poland, if not Europe.

Peón, a gifted player of the Galician *gaita* (bagpipes) and *pandeireta* (tambourine) as well as avant-garde electronics, brings all her skills to *Sun Celebration*, as well as unique melodeclamation vocals on ‘Midsummer Rain Song’. Throughout the album there is an interchange between cultures, but also generations. DJ Feel-X, a pioneer of Polish hip-hop, brings scratches and electronic production on ‘Perkun’s Fire’ and Warsaw-based dub and reggae producers Studio AS One give bottom end to ‘Isue/sun Celebration’, while the vocalists mine their traditions with a surfeit of emotion. Sanjay Khan from the Dhoad Gypsies of Rajasthan demonstrates the power of Indian folk vocals and Warsaw Village Band’s own singers explore *biały głos* (white voice), a rural singing style based on an open-throat, screaming-like technique.

Ewa Wałecka, Magdalena Sobczak Kotnarowska and Sylwia Świątkowska

Michał Sitkiewicz / Paweł Sokołowsk

The album took four years to make with many twists and turns but the result cannot be underestimated, either for the qualities of the album itself, or for what it represents. Maciej Szajkowski, a founding member of Warsaw Village Band, says *‘In the era of corrupt politics and bankruptcy of religious institutions, culture can be a remedy for the crises and afflictions of the modern world.’* This acclaimed record is an astonishing tribute to this idea. *MATEUSZ DOBROWOLSKI*

+ LISTEN *‘Misery Masovian Blues’ is on this issue’s covermount CD, track 14*

Derek Gripper (right) performing with John Williams at *Songlines Encounters*

2016

Derek Gripper reflects on a performance that allowed him to embrace the profundity of Malian music with one of his favourite guitarists

In the 90s, the University of Cape Town had this little room on the top floor of the old building. You could get a record and sit at a booth with headphones to listen. You couldn't find these records at record stores in Cape Town, and there wasn't any 'online' to speak of. This was our only window into the world of recorded sound and, for me, the world of the classical guitar.

Years later I was on a phone call to one of the guitarists that was on prime rotation during those listening sessions. John Williams was telling me he had been working on a new piece of music. I heard footsteps retreating from the phone and then John returned with a guitar and played music which took me straight back to those listening booths. Talking to him on the phone had just been having a conversation with a fellow guitarist, but when I was left with only the sound of the guitar, the importance of the event became clear, I even began to understand why I had decided to pursue a career as a classical guitarist.

I had got to know John after I sent a recording to his manager, which had been passed on. John had heard the recording and immediately called the Globe's Bill Barclay and told him to ask me to join a series being presented to inaugurate The Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, a brand-new indoor theatre at Shakespeare's Globe in London. We played this series twice, over two years. Then *Songlines*' Simon Broughton suggested we do it one more time, at Kings Place for the *Songlines Encounters Festival*.

I was delighted. This was an opportunity to redeem myself. The first concert we had only played one piece together. I had given John the score of my arrangement of 'Jarabi' by Toumani Diabaté. The second concert I had worked with a friend of mine, Cape Town guitarist Reza Khota, and we had written some very difficult music to accompany my arrangements of Toumani's music. We had added to the originals, and so, in some ways, John played with me but from outside of the original music itself, where I believe his desire had been to exist inside of it.

So round three, compliments of *Songlines*, allowed me to revisit and realise, as I have had to over and over again, that the profundity of much Malian music lies in its ability to evoke so much from so little. I realised that things that I could play solo could be spread out over two guitars, that for solo music to become duo music all you needed to do was share the load, not add more ideas.

I listened to John again, playing his solo set. And the experience again transported me without warning to my years in the listening lab, hearing but not seeing. After listening to the playing of the great John Williams from backstage at Kings Place, I could join John on stage and play with him the music of Mali's greatest composers: Fanta Sacko, Toumani Diabaté, Ballaké Sissoko, Sidiki Diabaté, Amadu Bansang Jobarteh.

Once on stage, with John playing beside me, it all felt completely natural. I was no longer listening to the faceless legend. I was playing with a fellow musician. The music was far simpler, far more enjoyable, we had breath in our lungs and space between the notes.

In fact, halfway through 'Tubaka' there was a disturbance in the crowd, but we paid no attention, just continued playing this magical music and enjoying our time together. Later we heard that somebody had been violently ill in the second row and was helped out of the hall while cleaners bustled in to get things back to normal. But we knew nothing of this. Just 'Tubaka', that love song as recorded by the queen of Bamako, Fanta Sacko, almost 50 years before our performance at Kings Place in London. *DEREK GRIPPER*

Simon Broughton

2017

A stacked bill in Georgia signals the coming of **Haitian power, poetry and positivity**

Chouk Bwa

Haitian Roots was a special concert that happened in 2017 during the annual two-week-long Savannah Music Festival. The double-bill featured a quartet led by Leyla McCalla with Dom Flemons, Bria Bonet and Daniel Tremblay (McCalla's husband), paired with Chouk Bwa, the Haitian *vodou* troupe, making their US debut. Both groups delivered bandstand-lifting performances, capped off by an impromptu artist-audience singalong that morphed into a spiritually transcendent communion. At the time I wrote this about McCalla's performance: '*The densely polyrhythmic music, crafted to summon vodou spirits, mesmerises the audience. People sway in their seats, then stand up and sway on their feet. As the concert comes to an end, it evokes a rousing tent revival gospel service with people clapping in unison, singing songs intelligible only as exultations and raising their hands in faithful invocation of gods and messengers from another culture. One middle-aged man, identifying himself as an evangelical Christian who had driven several hundred miles from Kentucky for the concert, succinctly sums up the event, saying: "This has been an overwhelming experience."*'

That extraordinary *konsè* on the Georgia coast may not have led to the surging global popularity of Haitian music, but it was certainly an indication that Haiti was ready to take centre stage. Today, musicians such as Moonlight Benjamin and Lakou Mizik combine *kompa* dance music, rock, jazz and blues to create a vibrant contemporary sound. Haitian-born artists including BIC, Tony Mix, Princess Eud and Wendyyy carry the obligatory 21st-century torch of rap and

JY Le Docte

Performing at London's Village Underground in 2017

2018

***Shamstep* pioneers make their mark with a message of peace, acceptance and integration that has never been more needed**

The Palestinian collective 47SOUL may have released their debut album, *Balfron Promise*, in 2018 and turned enough heads at the time to be considered the defining artists of the year, but with the fact that they celebrated their tenth anniversary in 2023 and the recent horrifying news coming from their country, it feels particularly appropriate to shine a light back on the group right now.

47SOUL – Tareq Abu Kwaik (aka El Far3i), Ramzy Suleiman, Walaa Sbait and Hamza Arnaout – first formed in 2013 in Jordan, showcasing an exciting mix of hip-hop, electronic and *dabke* (a Levantine folk dance). "The first ten years were quite a journey," they reflect, taking pride that over the years they've remained bilingual. "Playing the same set at Glastonbury that we would play in Palestine gives us hope that the voice of freedom is there all the time."

The group coined the term *shamstep* to describe their unique mix of EDM and dabke, and first came to our attention in 2015 with the release of an EP, appropriately titled *Shamstep*. By the time their debut full-length came out in 2018, they had lit up dancefloors around the world and earned a *Songlines Music Award* nomination in 2019. The album was named after the Balfron Tower in East London, where it was recorded, and was a tribute to its refugee inhabitants. It was as brilliant musically as it was politically – a danceable beacon of hope for peace.

Gregory Wood

hip-hop. Established *mizik rasin* (roots music) bands, such as Boukman Eksperyans, Boukan Ginen and RAM, spread their powerful messages of peace, love and civil resistance.

"More than ever, I find that people are open to talking about realities, especially the fact that the Haitian revolution [of 1804] was founded on the abolition of slavery, which should be known and celebrated globally," says McCalla, an American of Haitian descent. A big fan of *twoubadou* music, the New Orleans-based cellist-singer-composer (and 2020 winner of a *Songlines Music Award*) lists Natalie Joachim, Mélissa Laveaux, Lalin St Juste and Sanba Zao as Haitian (or related) musicians she is particularly moved by.

At the time of their US debut, Chouk Bwa had recently joined forces with two Brussels-based electronic musicians. Since then, Chouk Bwa & The Ångströmers have released two albums, including *Somanti* (2023), as well as two EPs, and also toured extensively throughout Europe and the UK (in 2022). When I spoke to the group's Edele Joseph in 2017 she told me: "It's important for you to know that the mission is to bring positive energy to people, something to keep and hold, something that makes them feel better and can be brought with them everywhere they go." Something they've delivered in troves ever since. *DOUG DELOACH*

And it is indeed because they've been a powerful symbol of peace in Palestine over their decade-long career that it feels more poignant than ever to remind readers of their music. As death tolls rise and protests grow, I wonder how the latest news is affecting their music and message. "It's truly painful but it was not news to us unfortunately," they admit. "The people dying in Gaza are our family, friends and associates… to explain this complexity and how it would affect our music, we might need a book, not an article…"

When asked what's next, they say, "more music." But a quiet has also descended on them, a pause to reflect and regroup in these trying times. "The priority now is ceasefire."

ALEXANDRA PETROPOULOS

2019

Nature, serendipity and quiet protests were at the heart of a spell-binding and truly multi-disciplinary partnership

Of all the musical collaborations to have featured in *Songlines*, few have, in my opinion, matched the beauty and importance of Spell Songs, in terms of subject matter, artistry and musicality.

The idea for the project initially came to light on a serendipitous evening at a Hay Festival event in November 2017. Caroline Slough, co-director of Folk by the Oak festival had gone to hear Jackie Morris and Robert Macfarlane talk about their recently-released book, *The Lost Words*, a gorgeously illustrated compendium of spells based on nature words that were in danger of disappearing from a children's dictionary. Slough was already a committed fan of Morris' works, but the moment that really sparked the idea for a musical companion piece was when they played a video of Kerry Andrew's take on the Wren spell: "That was really the inspiration of it all," remembers Slough. "It felt like the planets aligned that evening."

It's fair to say the Folk by the Oak team know a thing or two about what makes a good collaboration, having previously worked on various other collaborative projects including *The Elizabethan Session*. "I think what we're quite good at is hearing potentially what certain musicians together might sound like and where it might go… And so with Julie [Fowlis], Karine [Polwart], Rachel [Newton]… I could hear it already." Completing the Spell Songs ensemble dream team were Kris Drever, Jim Molyneux, Beth Porter and Seckou Keita.

Early January 2019 and the project started to take shape, as the musicians gathered for a five-day residency in order to conjure up 'spells', using the book as inspiration. "It was such an amazing thing to be part of and to just hear it coming together," recalls Slough. Another "crucial element," she says, has been Hudson Records' Andy Bell who performed his sonic alchemy in recording and producing the album.

Straight after being in the studio, the Spell Songs ensemble performed their first live shows. I remember vividly the one at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London where I did a Q&A with Morris and Macfarlane before the concert. Both seemed genuinely in awe of the musicians – and vice versa. One of the most magical moments was Morris conjuring up a backdrop of inky otters onstage as the musicians enchanted the packed hall with their freshly composed spells. The evening culminated with 'The Lost Words Blessing', an emotive song that has now become their trademark closing number. "It's a parting song, full of Gaelic spirit," remarks Fowlis, admitting "it's hard to sing without bawling!"

When the album finally came out that summer, I recalled Morris saying: "I don't think protest always has to be ugly; if you can do it beautifully and make people stop and think, that's great." And there's no denying that the original Spell Songs album is a thing of beauty: over a dozen original spells on CD, encased within a hardback book featuring an inspiring collection of words and images. And taking pride of place on the front cover – the wren, sat on an acorn – the tiny yet mighty bird that initiated the whole idea.

"I think it's putting nature at the forefront of the entire project," says Slough when asked about the key to Spell Songs' popularity and success. "People say 'oh, when I see a heron now, I hear the words, I hear the song.' I think the power of the music is that it does instil hope and a bit more love."

Morris and Macfarlane are currently working on their next book, entitled *The Book of Birds*, so we can look forward to the Spell Songs ensemble taking flight again and creating another timely and *'beautiful protest.'* *JO FROST*

Below: otter sketch from *The Lost Words* tour; Bottom (L-R): Jim Molyneux, Kris Drever, Seckou Keita, Julie Fowlis, Beth Porter, Karine Polwart, Rachel Newton

Elly Lucas

Jake Blount performing at Charm City Bluegrass Festival in 2022

A new generation of **Black artists in American folklore** provided a balm during lockdown and led the way for a more inclusive brand of folk music

It was a year dominated by fear and loneliness. And yet, despite being in the midst of a global pandemic, there was so much music being made within the confined lives we found ourselves inhabiting. One album in particular stood out among the chaos that was both a balm for the times and a sign of cultural change: American banjo and fiddle player Jake Blount's *Spider Tales*.

"So much was going on, and it's just making me think about how many ways that year changed my life and everybody's life," Blount reflects. "It's been kind of amazing to me when people come up to me at shows and have said, '*Spider Tales* was what kept me going through those first few months of lockdown.' I can't believe that anybody had time to spend on that record with everything that was going on – everyone was terrified. It means a lot that, in the midst of everything that happened during that year, anyone would even remember that this came out."

"I have respect for that album and what I made, and I don't want to come off as one of those musicians who hates their past self," he's clear to add. "I don't feel that way, but I do feel quite small in the world, and it's meaningful to me to know that the work was noticed, even when so many other things were happening."

But perhaps it shouldn't be so surprising that *Spider Tales* made its mark. The album mined the American tradition for the voices of Black artists whose music has been colonised into the folk canon and all but erased from history. Yes, there was a pandemic happening, but Black Lives Matter was making international headlines at the time and *Spider Tales* was released only four days after George Floyd's tragic murder. "*Spider Tales* really came out of a desire to recognise the contributions of these people who have not received the credit they were due and recognise that there is this whole tradition in history that has been deliberately erased from our conversations about folk music," he told *Songlines* last year.

And while Blount might have been carrying on a trend that started almost two decades ago with the Carolina Chocolate Drops, *Spider Tales* seemed to mark the beginning of a new wave of artists reclaiming minority voices in the folk tradition. In fact, it was just after Blount's TOTW review that we ran an article on this very trend (#162). "My friend and mentor Rhiannon Giddens has talked about this a lot, that it used to be she knew every Black person playing this music personally, and now she'll come to events and meet new people, and that's exciting to her. It's exciting to me, too. It's a cool thing to be a part of a movement."

But Blount is clear to point out that while these new artists might be part of a refreshing trend, they're each distinct, reclaiming those voices in unique ways. "Things get tricky when you start proposing a marketing term for people based on their race rather than what they do." He is explaining why he took such contention against the blanket 'Afro-Americana' term proposed by a *Paste Magazine* journalist in an attempt to lump all these artists into one basket. '*Black people have always been a part of Americana*,' Blount wrote in that same magazine, '*because Americana was built with our sounds*.'

And indeed these last few years have seen a wealth of artists making sure we recognise these sounds – and all in very unique ways, from Blount's string band music of *Spider Tales* to *Songs of Our Native Daughters* and the music of each of the musicians from that collective (the aforementioned Giddens, Amythyst Kiah, Leyla McCalla and Allison Russell). Even Blount's latest project, New Dangerfield (with banjoist Tray Wellington, singer Kaïa Kater and bassist Nelson Williams), has been trying to figure out where exactly they fit on that continuum, while reminding people that they are their own thing. "A lot of us are struggling with that… [It's] going to be interesting to watch as things continue to grow and expand and new people continue to come into the fold. What will [the scene] look like going forward?" Hopefully it will be more diverse than ever thanks to artists like Blount. ***ALEXANDRA PETROPOULOS***

David LaMason

2021

Tirana settles its score with a celebratory new soundtrack

I didn't have much Central Albanian music in my collection: an ancient Artimpex EP bought from the mysterious and long-vanished Albanian Shop in Covent Garden, and a woozy, rackety cassette tape heard in a bar in Tirana in the early 1990s, which I had begged to be allowed to buy. So the release of a collection of this charming, urbane, complex music, poised between western harmony and eastern melody, heroic celebration and delicate regret, recorded by the Tirana-Tirona Allstars to celebrate the centenary of Tirana (Tirona in Gheg Albanian) being proclaimed Albania's capital delighted me.

It didn't sound quite like what I was used to though; it was more varied, transparent, determinedly acoustic, and the arrangements seemed unfamiliar. The project, it transpired, had been curated by a team led by two women, ethnomusicologist and producer Lucy Durán from the UK, and Edit Pula, a painter and festival organiser at the heart of Tirana's arts scene. Both say they shared the idea of going beyond simply documenting this music, which remains truly underground (Pula says "the only place you can go to listen to real old Tirana music is still the *rakia* bar, where the musicians play for one another"), in order to create a work of art, bring out its hidden sides, represent a way of life, unite the artists and the audience, and present a "soundtrack to the city."

What happened next? Although Durán notes it took time for the musicians to "feel like a real group," the result was a revelation abroad, while at home the musicians have emerged from the shadows, playing at festivals and on television. From every corner of Skanderbeg Square, the city's heart, the sound of live bands playing Tiranese music now welcomes visitors. The idea of a soundtrack to the city has literally become the soundtrack of the city.

KIM BURTON

Above: Snaps from the Tirana-Tirona Allstars' recording sessions; Left (L-R): Producer Martin Appleby, Edit Pula and Lucy Durán

2022

Classically trained musicians toss boundaries aside and share their souls

How Abel Selaocoe got to selling out concert halls internationally, and how his brilliant debut album landed in our ears in 2022 is an impressive story. The cellist, who fuses Western classical and South African and African hymnal/musical traditions, began learning music at ACOSA, a music school in Soweto, a little way away from the township where he grew up. Of home, he says, "I just remember having a miscellaneous grouping of instruments like tuba, clarinet, trombone and cello. And then going, 'shall we play?' ACOSA didn't have all the resources, and that's where that creativity came in of DIY, find-your-own combinations. Sometimes we learnt [classical music] off the radio, just listening by ear and then somebody could afford to buy a score later on. But you've got this very beautiful way of having learnt the music from a very deep place." From ACOSA, Selaocoe went on to earn a scholarship to a private school, St Johns: "Basically, they had the resources. There was an auditorium, a place to practice and cello became a real focus. And then maybe the vision blurred a little bit from the traditional stuff that was just in the background… So, I was strictly classical at that point."

Next came an opportunity to study music in Manchester. Once he had found his feet in that city, he began connecting with other diasporic musicians, and his influences merged. "I started to meet incredible improvising musicians, *kora* players, *djembé* players… That was outside of the Royal Northern College of Music. And mixing those two experiences of an institution that has had generations of classical music, but also using the fabric of the city to cover what I do – it became my voice. All the traditional music from home came rushing back. It feels like it was just waiting for the right moment. And then I became obsessed with how the cello is this infinite violin that is connected to every string instrument and every African string instrument."

During this period, he met The Manchester Collective, an innovative group that he has worked closely with over the years. The Collective's lead violinist, Rakhi Singh, explains that from the beginning, "we wanted to be in a group where we could play what we wanted and how we wanted and where we wanted, because that wasn't existing in all of the institutions that we were working with." In 2019, The Collective toured with Abel's trio Chesaba under the name Sirocco, to huge acclaim.

All this culminated in Abel's 2022 debut, *Where is Home / Hae Ke Kae*, which won him the Best Fusion gong at the *Songlines Music Awards*. Opening with a South African hymn, the album features ten original arrangements from Selaocoe and his community of musicians alongside six traditionally classical recitals. In the original tracks, Abel pushes his voice and cello to new realms, sometimes guttural and growling, sometimes gently falsetto. In the classical pieces, he pays homage to musicians he admires, lightly imbuing their works with his own character.

In the same year, Jasdeep Singh Degun (Best Newcomer at 2023's *Songlines Music Awards*) released *Anomaly* which saw him bring together a cohort of Indian classical musicians to do something totally, well, anomalous. Sarathy Korwar, too, newly merged influences ranging from African to Indian to Western Classicism in *KALAK* (Best Asia/Pacific in our 2023 awards). Reactions to these were fizzing, excited, disbelieving. Struggling to define it myself, I ask Rakhi and Abel what they think charges this music and collaboration.

Rakhi cites connection, sharing and vulnerability. The question, for her is, "How are we communicating the depths of our soul to people? Because that's ultimately what we're there to do… I don't want to go to a concert and just see someone playing technique. I want to have an experience of them sharing their soul, whatever the genre." Abel concurs: "Through the music, we all give each other permission [to be ourselves] somehow." *EMMA RYCROFT*

Yasmin Klein

Abel Selaocoe performing at The Roundhouse in 2022

2023

From Mercury Prize nominees to *Hootenanny* hustlers, 2023's **Irish musicians** gained fame and acclaim

The Mary Wallopers

With the release of hugely praised albums from Lankum, Lisa O'Neill, John Francis Flynn, The Mary Wallopers and ØXN, to name but a few, 2023 felt like the year of Irish music.

Myles O'Reilly has travelled Ireland extensively over the last decade and more, creating films of the artists he's met and heard along the way for his YouTube series *Ain't No Disco* as well as other projects. A range of musicians, including Lankum, Ye Vagabonds, Lisa O'Neill, Eoghan Ó Ceannabháin and Martin Hayes have been given a platform through his work. And inspired him to create music himself again along the way. After many years of staying behind the camera, he released his own album, *The Beautiful Road*, with Rónán Ó Snodaigh in 2023. Through all this, O'Reilly has a comprehensive knowledge of Irish artists old and young.

Sorcha Francces Ryder

"I think maybe this is the third wave [of Irish music popularity]," he reflects, "maybe it's the fourth, I don't know. I think my great grandfather sang in Rome with John McCormack, one of his claims to fame. So maybe two Irish bel canto singers in Rome singing for the Pope in the early 19th century, you know, that might have been a bit of a rise [in Irish music's popularity] there."

It's not a new phenomenon. "I definitely see this pattern," says O'Reilly, "it's a generational thing, and each new generation wanting to sound completely different than the last, but the song's being the exact same." It's a fair description of the suddenly popular new music, as well as of the popular music that came before. Through the 70s, 80s and 90s, The Pogues, Planxty and The Dubliners, among others, gave rise to an Irish music craze through reimagining the traditional songbook. Most, if not all, of 2023's big Irish albums threaded past tradition through present preoccupation: Lisa O'Neill put music to Patrick Kavanagh's poem 'The Great Hunger'; 'Go Dig My Grave' received a haunting re-sounding from the Mercury Prize-nominated Lankum, with bells tolling for the lost and lonely; and The Mary Wallopers (who appeared on Jools Holland's New Years *Hootenanny* with The Pogues' Spider Stacey) gave voice to Pecker Dunne's 'Wexford', ensuring that the Traveller/musician's ever-relevant story is not forgotten. "The tradition and the stories don't change much," O'Reilly continues, "But I love how the children are, and the people, the next generation will want to do it their way."

When asked where the innovation might have come from, O'Reilly muses, "Maybe it's just because… there's not enough of a population to sustain an industry in Ireland where artists here feel under pressure to write and play for them and keep the songs the same… We're not beholden to anyone really. We can totally fuck it up if we want … nothing to lose. That's the attitude. Lankum is a perfect example of that… there's a hunger here, a dire hunger." Beyond that, he remarks, lies history, "a deep, deep trauma. And music is, I think for the Irish, it's the easiest way of accessing that trauma and understanding it, singing and letting go of a lot of things that we hold inside us, even genetically that are passed down to us." A passer-by in O'Reilly's latest video, *A City Under Quiet Lights Vol II*, performs a song on the famine. As this man succinctly puts it, "It's a very sad story, but a beautiful melody." *EMMA RYCROFT*

TAKING THE CROWN

Feminist supergroup **Les Amazones d'Afrique** mark a decade of existence this year, with a new release to celebrate. ***Jane Cornwell*** talks politics, power and positivity with the current line-up. "Women are suffocating. We want them to breathe," they tell her.

Les Amazones d'Afrique are a band born to fight. Over the last decade or so this mighty pan-African collective, this all-female supergroup, has taken on the patriarchy in ways cultural, political and transnational, wielding their powerful voices and formidable charisma like weapons.

"We are named for the warrior women of Dahomey, who for 200 years protected what is now modern-day Benin," says Beninese vocalist/actress Fafa Ruffino, via Zoom from Togo. "Being a woman in Africa, being a woman anywhere, can be tough. We want women to rise up, be stronger together. To find joy. To move."

Indeed, while Les Amazones' latest record, their third overall, *Musow Danse* (Women's Dance), contains all the elements that wooed fans from the get-go – the bold solos and glorious harmonies, the mix of genres and strength of conviction – it is also a container for something more buoyant, more effervescent.

Produced by Los Angeles-based Irish multi-instrumentalist and electro-shaman Jacknife Lee, the man behind albums for everyone from U2, REM and Taylor Swift to Malian diva (and former Amazone) Rokia Koné, *Musow Danse* is what it says: a dance album.

"Together we are an incredible musical force," continues Ruffino, who joined the group for their second album, 2020's *Amazones Power*, and whose vocals span gospel, soul and cultural styles from Benin and Burkina Faso to songs taught to her by her Ghanaian grandmother. "You can feel the effect we have when we play live. It is like we are suspended in space and the people are drinking our words. Women come up to us afterwards and tell us, 'Sisters, we needed to hear this message from you today.'"

She pauses for a beat or two. "Africa for me is the best place in the world, but not when it comes to the way women are conditioned. So, we are trying to un-brainwash them. Our message is deep: women are suffocating. We want them to breathe."

They sing as much on the potent single 'Kuma Fo (What They Say)', a tune delivered by the five main Amazones on this album: much-loved Malian singer and original member Mamani Keïta (whose 2013 album *Kanou* was a *Songlines* Top of the World); rising Burkino Faso star Kandy Guira (also a Top of the World with her last album, *Nagtaba*); Ivory Coast tour-de-force and *Songlines* regular Dobet Gnahoré – who was introduced as a member when the group played Glastonbury, Barcelona's Primavera Sound and Morocco's Gnaoua Music Festival in 2022 – as well as new addition, Congolese singer/actress Alvie Bitemo, and Ruffino, whose feminist awakening began at the knee of her activist mother, whose personal experience of excision (forced genital mutilation) and polygamy drove her to establish a women's association in Benin.

> "YOU CAN FEEL THE **EFFECT** WE HAVE WHEN WE PLAY **LIVE**... **WOMEN** COME UP TO US AND TELL US, '**SISTERS**, WE **NEEDED** TO HEAR THIS **MESSAGE**'"

'*Rise up*,' declaim the divas in their various languages, as percussion, bass, drums and synths crash and shimmer around them. '*Life loves joy, let's be happy*.'

"It's a song about seizing the moment," says Alvie Bitemo, whose CV spans activism, stand-up comedy, musical theatre, modern jazz and roles in theatre and television. "We are telling women to take the floor without asking for permission. Each of us in the group has a different background. But we all treasure freedom. This is what links us to the African continent."

On a Zoom from Paris, Bitemo flashes a smile. "Our producer Jacknife Lee understood our need to express ourselves, to be creatively free. As modern Africans we were open to whatever he brought us." From his studio in Topanga Canyon, between stints working with U2 at their Sphere residency in Las Vegas, the Grammy-winning Lee ▸

Clockwise from top: Kandy Guira, Dobet Gnahoré, Fafa Ruffino, Mamani Keïta

THE UK's BIGGEST LIVE FESTIVAL
OF AFRICAN MUSIC AND CULTURE

africa oye

est. 1992

22 & 23 JUNE 2024
SEFTON PARK, LIVERPOOL, UK

"It isn't just the largest celebration of African music and culture in Britain, it's the best"

THE SUNDAY TIMES

africaoye.com

LISTEN TO AFRICA

Supported by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

#africaoye

Liverpool City Council

approached this new collaboration with the same innovative, 'EDM-esque' verve he applied to Rokia Koné's critically praised 2022 debut, *Bamanan*. As with Koné, there were no face-to-face meetings or collaborative jams. Files were sent. Vocals were pre-recorded (by producer Nadjib Ben Bella of Montparnasse Musique) and listened to until each voice was utterly familiar: Keïta's *muezzin*-style melismas. Gnahoré's cool and cogent wide range. The Nigerian Pidgin stylings of Nneka, an original Amazones member, who guest features on two of *Musow Danse*'s 12 original tracks ('*I know that we cannot continue like this*,' she rap/sings alongside Keïta on 'Bobo Me', '*we call on all women*').

After performing at Glastonbury in 2022

"REPRESSION TOUCHES **EVERY WOMAN**. IT IS NOT A QUESTION OF **COLOUR** OR **CULTURE"**

Then Lee set about experimenting: removing vocals, dropping them in, juxtaposing, bending, complementing. Adding live guitars, keyboards and analogue synths; hi-hat and hip-hop patterns and dirty back-to-front beats. There are *likembe* thumb-piano-like pings throughout the title-track, in which languages including Bambara, Ewe and Fon vie and blend. Elsewhere, Guira sings sweet and strong on the arpeggiated 'To Be Loved'; Gnahoré reaches back from the future on the gritty 'Kiss Me'; Bitemo takes a dazzling lead on 'Mother Murakoze', her lyrics telling – in Dondo, Lingala, Kinyarwanada – of motherhood's rollercoaster.

Africa is there in the use of call-and-response, the sonorities particular to place of origin, the project's collaborative nature. "Inclusivity is what Les Amazones is about," says Ruffino, who celebrates the theme on 'Queen Kuruma'. "We have done conferences in French high schools with teenagers, some gay and transgender. They tell us life is so hard for them. We say, 'Come and sit with us. Let's go forward together.'"

Taking inspiration, too, from the seminal 1960s female pop group, Les Amazones de Guinée, Les Amazones d'Afrique was founded in 2014 by Valérie Malot of French agency 3D Family in collaboration with Malian stars Mariam Doumbia and Oumou Sangaré, as well as the aforementioned Mamani Keïta.

"I saw how beautiful their lives were with their perfume, fashion, music and divinations," says Malot, side-by-side with Bitemo on the Zoom's split screen. "We connected, and in our conversations agreed that female repression is something that touches every woman. It is not a question of colour or culture."

"Our enthusiasm at the start was so powerful," she shrugs. "But it has really taken us ten years to become strong, make us a proper positive force. We came up against all sorts of walls but instead of giving up we built doors, went through them, and have never stopped. We're a family where Rokia Koné found her voice to be an international artist. Oumou recently said, 'Wow, I am so proud of what you have done.'"

A smile. "It's like, 'Yes, we can,'" she says.

From guests spots by the patriarchy-wrestling likes of multiple Grammy-winner Angélique Kidjo and revered Malian *jelimuso* (female *griot*) Kandia Kouyaté on ***République*** *Amazone*, their 2017 debut, Les Amazones have gone on to welcome a raft of multi-generational vocalists and musicians from across Africa and the diaspora, the instrumentalists and producers mostly (largely owing to a scarcity of female contenders) made up of men. Now, as with, say, WOMAD in the UK – which they stormed in 2020 and again in 2022 – Les Amazones d'Afrique have become a brand name, an indicator of quality no matter the names in the line-up.

This current incarnation of the supergroup is its most upbeat yet, as evidenced by 'Kuma Fo''s Morocco-filmed music video, in which the women don billowing primary-coloured robes to sing, stride and dance through a desert landscape. Fighting against serious concerns including domestic violence, forced marriage, FGM and unequal access to land remains central to their aesthetic. A group discussion filmed in Morocco finds the Amazones expounding in French on stories lived and told ("I know of a mother who came back from the river to find her two little girls covered in blood, mutilated by the grandmother and the aunts," says Ruffino. "So it is women who also perpetuate this ancestral tradition, and women who must learn to stop these things.")

It is a huge fight, says Ruffino. "We won't see the results while we are still alive. The fight didn't start with us, and it will not end with us. So, we need to hold tight and keep giving out these powerful messages, especially to little girls. They are the future ministers and policy makers. They are the flowers."

If the pan-African language lyrics on *Musow Danse* feel less aggressive, more catchy, clubby and danceable, than on their previous records, it's simply another stage – another door opened – along the journey. It's the sound of a project in bloom, says Malot. "Everything we aimed for has come together on this album. It has not been a cool experience of smoking cigarettes in holders by a swimming pool," she jokes.

"But the members of Les Amazones have always understood that to be in the struggle is to bring freedom and independence. Alvie, Mamani, Fafa, Dobet, Kandy, Nneka… all know that you have to be a fighter if you are a woman, particularly if you are born in a certain region of this planet. They know that we need to bring men in to help, to understand, because freedom benefits everybody."

Bitemo nods, leans forward. "Each of us is bringing our own lives, languages and traditions to this album," she says. "We are all our own queens. Queen Alvie. Queen Fafa. That for me is a key message of Les Amazones d'Afrique. You can be the queen of your life but no one is going to hand that crown to you."

Another smile. "You have to take it." ◆

+ ALBUM *Musow Danse is a Top of the World this issue, see p52*
+ LISTEN *'Musow Danse (Women's Dance)' is on this issue's covermount CD, track 1*

Karen Paulina Biswell; Oran Mullan

Reviews

We review full-length world music, roots and folk albums (not singles or EPs), available on CD, digital or vinyl.
Please note we only accept digital submissions. Email details of albums to reviews@songlines.co.uk for consideration

Africa *52*
Americas *56*
Europe *64*
Fusion *72*
Asia *78*
Pacific *79*
Classical & Jazz *80*

Songlines digital subscribers can download the Top of the World & Bonus tracks every issue. For more details visit songlines.co.uk/subs

Free album download CLICK HERE

TOP OF THE WORLD

BUY NOW

Les Amazones d'Afrique
Musow Dance

Real World Records

★★★★½

When Les Amazones d'Afrique gave their debut British concert at WOMAD, back in 2016, they sounded gloriously original. Here were a group of great African female singers of different ages, from different countries and musical backgrounds, who clearly loved working together, mixing traditional influences with reggae, blues, rap and glorious harmonies, while cheerfully fighting for women's rights and empowerment. Their three subsequent albums have presented a very different, increasingly contemporary pop image, as they collaborated first with electronica exponent Liam Farrell and now with celebrity producer Jacknife Lee, who has worked with everyone from U2 to The Killers and Taylor Swift, and matches the six female vocalists against a slick, rousing barrage of electro-percussion, bass lines and keys. Their ranks no longer include Oumou Sangaré, Angélique Kidjo or Mariam Doumbia so the 'supergroup' tag could be questioned, but there are some fine voices here, including those of founder member Mamani Keïta from Mali, Ivory Coast star Dobet Gnahoré, Nneka from Nigeria and Alvie Bitemo from the Congo. They are at their best on the exuberant opening title-track or on Bitemo's defiant 'Amahoro', with its message '*stand tall, be strong*.' But it would be great if they had escaped from the incessant backing to include acoustic tracks and a reminder of their exquisite a capella harmonies.

ROBIN DENSELOW

TRACK TO TRY *Musow Dance*

Aron & the Jeri Jeri Band
Dama Bëgga Ñibi (I Want to Go Home)

Urban Trout

★★★★½

In the spring of 2020, Bakane Seck, the Senegalese percussionist and founder of Dakar's Jeri Jeri Band, found himself stranded by lockdown in Berlin, where he met the New Zealand-born electronic producer Aron Ottignon. In uncertain times, Ottignon's studio became a meeting place for the city's West African diaspora and this album began to take shape, starting with the title-track on which Pape Diouf sings the refrain '*I want to go home*' over a thrilling fusion of *mbalax* rhythms and Ottignon's jazzy, electronically-treated piano stabs. The mix of Senegalese tradition and electronica is reminiscent of the kind of experimental groove alchemy heard on Baaba Maal's 2023 album *Being* and the great man himself turns up on the track 'Teddoungal', singing in a high, soulful wail over clattering tribal percussion and blissful synth patterns from Ottignon. Once lockdown was over, the album grew in other directions – 'Kaolack', for instance, was recorded on a journey to Bakane's home town where his family joined in an impromptu jam with steel drums before Ottignon added layers of swirling electronic mystery back in Berlin. Other guest vocalists include the young female Gambian singer Toufa Mbaye, Aka Boy on the hypnotic 'Galdoorée' and the brilliant Sidy Diop on the dub-heavy 'Maam Baay'.

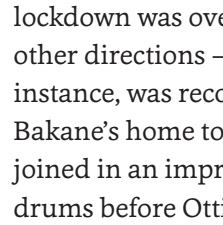
NIGEL WILLIAMSON

TRACK TO TRY *Teddoungal*

Abdullah Ibrahim
3

Gearbox Records

★★★★½



Anyone who caught the concert at London's Barbican last year by veteran South African jazz pianist Abdullah Ibrahim will know that at 89, he is still playing with the same exquisite lyricism and masterful poise that he displayed when he first emerged under the name Dollar Brand playing alongside Hugh Masekela in The Jazz Epistles more than 60 years ago. Like Buena Vista Social Club's late octogenarian pianist Rubén González, physical frailty may have meant he needed help onto the stage but once seated at the piano, his fingers were as dextrous as ever. Fortunately for those who weren't there, the concert was recorded. Even better news is that before he took the stage he also recorded a set without an audience straight to an analogue on a 1" Scully tape machine. Accompanied by the flute and sax of Cleave Guyton and Noah Jackson on bass and cello, the playing on both sets is masterful, the arrangements taking in every aspect of Abdullah Ibrahim's musical history from township jive to American jazz via classical music while the material ranges from tunes by Ellington and Coltrane to his own meditative compositions such as the wondrous 'Water from an Ancient Well'.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

TRACK TO TRY *Water from an Ancient Well*

Jarabi Band
Duniama

Music in Exile

★★★★½

The Jarabi Band was formed a decade ago when Mohamed Camara, a Guinean-born, Australian-based *kora* player, songwriter and vocalist, and his wife Anna Camara, met guitarist David Tweedie at a folk festival. The trio were joined by bassist Georgia Frey and the quartet began exploring the interstices between African and Australian culture on a series of trips to Guinea. Since then they've expanded to become a sextet with the addition of drummer Maddison Carter and saxophonist Flora Carbo, two emerging young stars from the ▸

Paulina Biswell

Lagos Thugs
Chaos

Immensum Music

★★★★½

On first play of this sparkling debut album from Nigerian 12-piece Lagos Thugs, it's hard to believe you're not listening to Fela Kuti. The voice, the tone, the rhythms, the lyrics: it could almost be Nigeria's 'Black President' himself, reincarnated to resume his task of calling out corruption and injustice — a fearless act in a country where doing so could cost you your liberty or your life. Fela has, of course, been gone since 1997, but his baton has been taken up, musically and metaphorically, by frontman, singer & saxophonist Adetunji Adeyemi who hails from Africa's most populous city. Dispelling any doubts about the band's inspiration and the severity of the task they've inherited, the opening track, 'Kalakuta President', with its immense trumpet solo, is indeed a paean to Olufela Olusegun Oludotun 'Fela' Ransome-Kuti, the king of Afrobeat whose own mother paid the ultimate price for her son's musical outspokenness. She died as a result of injuries after being thrown from the second-floor of Fela's nightclub and political commune, the Afrika Shrine, after it was raided by armed soldiers incensed at his mocking of them on his 1976 album *Zombie*.

Since commanding a weekly residence at popular Lagos nightspot, the Bature Brewery, after a live appearance there in January 2021, Lagos Thugs have appeared at Nigerian jazz festivals and on MTV Africa. They have also acted as support for Fela's son, Seun Kuti, including at his concerts staged in his father's former nightclub, which has been rebuilt and named the New Afrika Shrine – in spite of challenges by Nigerian authorities – by Seun's siblings, Yeni and Femi.

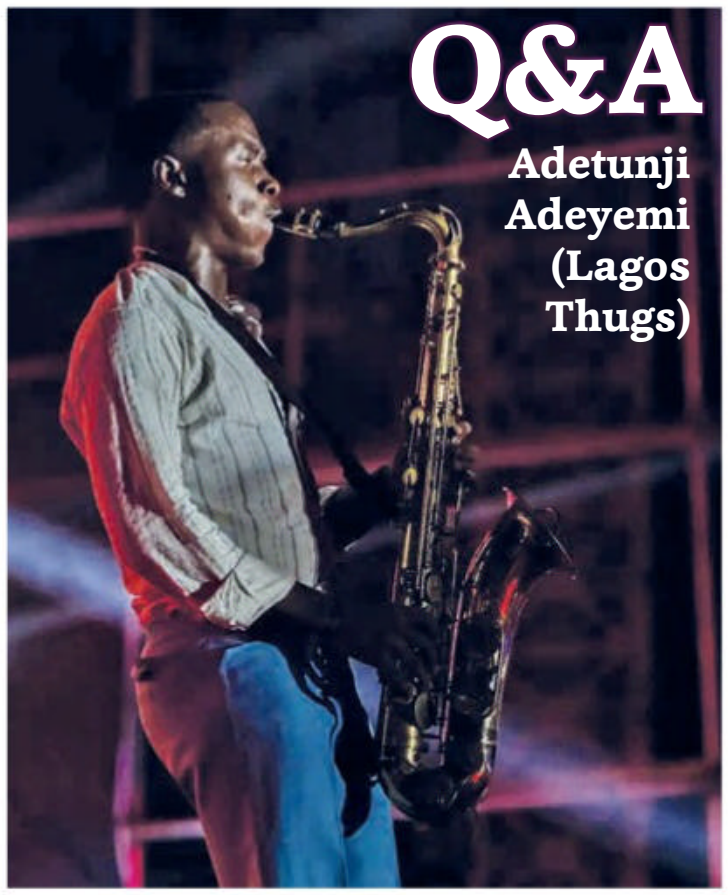
Singing, as Fela did, in Pidgin, the English dialect used as a lingua franca throughout Nigeria, Lagos Thugs have garnered critical acclaim for their potent mix of Afrobeat, jazz, dub and traditional drumming from Cuba and West Africa — often heard in Congolese *soukous* music.

Their success has hardly been hindered, either, by praise from Fela's trumpeter, Muyiwa Kunnuji, who has also played with Seun, as well as with Tony Allen. Kunnuji says Lagos Thugs are "playing exactly as we did. The same energy! They're playing proper Afrobeat."

This album has been co-produced by Paris-based DJ Ness Afro who has endowed it with a warm, 1970s analogue sound, reminiscent of Afrobeat's golden age. It's hard to find a favourite among the four, equally impressive, tracks. However, 'Wetin I See' — featuring Kiala Nzavotunga, the Angolan-Congolese guitarist who played with Fela's Egypt 80 — carries the banner high, both in song and sentiment. It's a soulful and reflective lament, in the style that Fela personified five decades ago, on how Africa, a continent unrivalled for its natural and human resources, still suffers at the hands of its political leaders.

RUSSEL HIGHAM

TRACK TO TRY *Innocent Blood*



Osazphotography

It's clear that the band's name might be something of a misnomer. These are intelligent, talented musicians making well-crafted songs about weighty subjects. So why the name?
The kind of music that we play, we are playing by force. These are not love songs. We cannot sing love songs because there is no love in Lagos. Afrobeat is the music of consciousness. You can't be calm when you hear it [because] it makes you aware of what is going around you. So we are thugs, or rebels, that cause chaos — not with guns or violence but with our music, by raising consciousness.

Have things improved in Nigeria or do the same problems exist for politically conscious musicians as in Fela Kuti's time?
For me, it's the same, maybe worse. But I really hope that young generations will open their minds to what's going on through our music, like they did then. Fela wanted us to see the perspective that we are always running away from. But that perspective is freedom. When Fela was alive, there was a military ruler [Sani Abacha]. Today in Nigeria, there is no junta, we have democracy, but the government behave the same: they look after themselves, their families and their friends, but they don't look after the people.

Tell us about the second song on the album, 'New Improved Elephants'.
It's inspired by 1970s TV advertisements for a detergent brand called Elephant Soap. They were selling a product that promised to take away all the dirt from your clothes. In our song, the lyrics are talking about taking away all the dirt — the corruption — that is causing a stain on our flag, on our people and our culture. About abolishing all the things holding Nigeria back. And the only thing we can do, like those old advert's used to say, is to wash deep down, right down to the roots.

Koum Tara

Melbourne jazz scene. The group's debut album, recorded in just four days, is a thrilling fusion of West African tradition and smart Afro-jazz. Mohamed is very clearly the bandleader with his rippling kora, rich vocals in a variety of different African languages and explosively polyrhythmic *balafon* playing on 'Fulani' and the title-track (which translates as 'in this world' in Susu). Yet the ensemble are far more than his backing band, adding vibrant jazz textures to his melodies with Carbo's sax making a particularly outstanding contribution on 'Djamana' and several other tracks. It's mostly high-octane stuff, tailor made for shuffling around a dancefloor, but the gentler moods of 'Sabui' and the closer 'Kolon Kuma' lend a more reflective tone.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

TRACK TO TRY *Djamana*

Koum Tara
Baraaim El-Louz

Odradek Records

★★★★½

Led by French pianist and composer Karim Maurice, Lyon-based group Koum Tara's second album on the Odradek label, *Baraaim El-Louz* (which translates from the Arabic as 'The Buds of the Almond Tree') finds the group exploring the roots of Algerian *chaâbi* music while simultaneously expanding on its possibilities.

While much of the music is based on traditional melodies and lyrics from legendary chaâbi singers such as Mahboub Bati (here delivered by Algerian singer Hamidou), Karim Maurice's deft piano and some graceful strings by members of the La Camerata orchestra help create a vibrant and imaginative confluence of North African and Western sounds. On 'Ana Aandi Qalb', for instance, the string section presents a dark, almost Hitchcock-esque filmic setting for Hamidou's brooding vocals. 'Cheh Ya Qalbi' pairs Arabic melodies and the twang of a *mandole* (Algerian mandolin) with the steady pulse of an acoustic jazz bass, fusion keyboards and grand orchestral strings. The instrumental 'Zidane' which closes the album builds further on Koum Tara's cinematic sound to create a fittingly graceful denouement.

PAUL BOWLER

TRACK TO TRY *Cheh Ya Qalbi*

Queen Lilas
Ntoto

Vonvon Rekords

★★★½☆

Born to Congolese parents, Lilas Lafleur grew up in Paris and as a teenager sang on several albums by her uncle, the *soukous* guitarist Diblo Dibala. After moving to Britain she recorded a gospel album and worked with various R&B artists but it seemed she was lost to music when she started entering bodybuilding competitions and studied to become a personal trainer. With a new name and now based in Birmingham (UK) she's returned to the musical fray with *Ntoto*, an album she's written, arranged and produced that returns to her Congolese roots but with a potent, contemporary urban twist. Album opener 'To Tongisa (Intro)' has Lilas chanting over clattering traditional percussion and sounding like a cross between Zap Mama and Angélique Kidjo. 'Lelo' and 'Lamuka' are upbeat party songs while 'Nostalgie', with its spiralling guitars, is a classic slice of traditional soukous and 'Mere Vonvon' is a soulful semi-acoustic pop ballad mourning the loss of her mother. Her voice possesses a striking vibrato, she writes memorable melodies and although the album sounds very much like an auteur project, with a cracking band she could be a dynamic stage presence.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

TRACK TO TRY *Nostalgie*

Queen Lilas

Super Biton de Ségou
Afro Jazz Folk Collection Vol 2

Mieruba

★★★★½

Three years ago, Mieruba – a rarity among crate-digging enterprises in that the label is actually based in West Africa – issued a first volume of rare recordings by Super Biton, a band

Bruno Belleudy, Darron Palmer Photography

that has been an institution in the Ségou region of Mali since 1964. Now comes a welcome second volume of equally rare tracks from the 1970s. All but one of these tracks were recorded live and they sound like a band ready to give its audience whatever it wanted. Swaying Afro-Latin dance rhythms *à la* Baobab? Then 'Bouguel' is for you. If it's a traditional Mande song you're after, there's 'Atou N Diaye'. Jazzy brass and funk guitar? Try 'Diarabi Muso'. There's even a syncopated rumba that might have come right out of New Orleans on 'Nantan' complete with Louis Armstrong-style trumpet, while the folkish 'Farafina' is the best sounding track, simply because it's the only studio recording.

Super Biton were still going strong in 2015 when Simon Broughton reviewed their performance for *Songlines* at Ségou's Festival On The Niger and reported that they '*sounded dated*.' Happily these tracks from half a century ago sound authentically timeless rather than out of time.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

TRACK TO TRY *Bouguel*

Teni

'Devil Dance') and name Afrobeats producers such as Blaise Beatz on 'Lanke', while 'Ino' features the saxophone squalls of Afrobeat scion, Mádé Kuti. A work in which Teni's emotions run the gamut, her complexity investing a sound that can feel anodyne with spice and depth.

JANE CORNWELL

TRACK TO TRY *Malaika*

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Afrika Muye Muye! : Tanzanian Rumba and Muziki Wa Dansi (1968-1970)

Recordiana

★★★★½

Put together by music historian and archivist Rob Allingham with research and translation help from Werner Graebner, *Afrika Muye Muye!* is an intriguing, rhythmic and laid-back selection of 17 songs that were originally released as 45rpm singles back in the days when the rumba dance boom still held sway across East Africa. Every major town in Tanzania had its own dance band, influenced by the music of Cuba and the Congo, and the musicians made their livings by playing live, often in their own clubhouses. Morogoro was one major musical centre, boasting both the Cuban Marimba Band, one of the country's top bands, responsible for the glorious, lilting title-track of this compilation, and the Morogoro Jazz Band, headed at the time of these recordings by a great singer and guitarist, Mbaraka Mwinshehe, in powerful form here on 'Nimechoka'. From Tanga, on the northern coast of Tanzania, came Atomic Jazz Band, who add saxophone to the lilting guitars, vocals and percussion on 'Njoo Mpenzi Njoo'. This was a time of political upheaval in a relatively newly independent Tanzania, with President Julius Nyerere's mass-nationalisation policies leading even to the state-control of bands, through what was known as the 'Ujaama' policy. Nuta Jazz Band were one of the first to be state-run, and the process clearly didn't harm their music. They have five tracks on the *Afrika Muye Muye!* compilation, and their cheerful, confident and upbeat 'Safari Ya Nuta Jazz' is one of the highlights of the overall set.

ROBIN DENSELOW

TRACK TO TRY *Afrika Muye Muye* by Cuban Marimba Band

Teni
Tears of the Sun

Platoon

★★★½☆

The sophomore album from rising Nigerian star Teni is an Afrobeats-tastic affair in which the artist sings and raps in a hybrid of English, Pidgin and Yoruba while all around her, synth melodies curl, bass beats boom and vocoders turn vocals robotic, as is the way of the genre. Nigeria's Afrobeats (that's Afrobeats plural) has long been the domain of the male likes of Wizkid and Burna Boy, whose macho flexing dovetails with the punch and thwack of the often synthetic sound. A featured guest on works by everyone from Stormzy to Wizkid, Teni, however, leavens proceedings with her melodic vocal range and a winning vulnerability that offers up scenes from her life, from her relationship with God – the catchy, Genio-produced 'Malaika' – to the bouncy, hook-laden, double-time rap wonder that is 'No Days Off' (named by *Rolling Stone* as one of the songs of 2023) and 'YBGFA (Young Black Girl From Africa)', a paean to body positivity and an embracing of her sexuality. This is urban traditional music, as stamped by guest features by rappers including Odumodublvck (on the attitude-laden

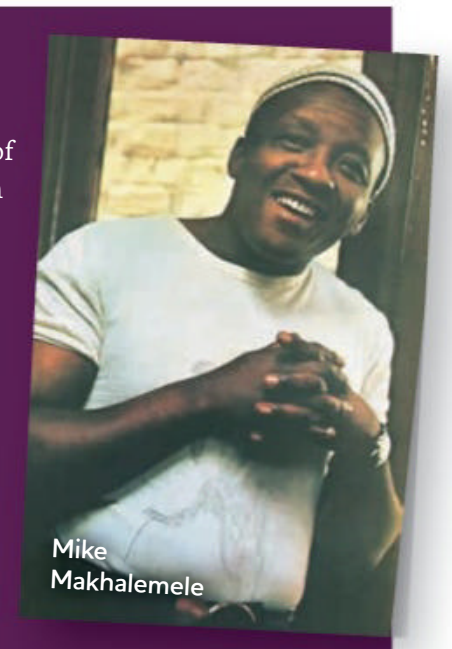
Shaquille Kokumo / Delenn (DD Vaughan)

SOUTH AFRICAN JAZZ *by Nigel Williamson*

The death, reported in *Songlines* last year, of Julian Bahula robbed us of one of the last remaining links with the golden age of South African township jazz. 'Golden age' is perhaps a double-edged description, for although the music Black South African artists made during the apartheid years was a joyous celebration of the resilience of the human spirit, it was, of course, made under extreme duress and adversity which forced many of its leading exponents into exile, including Bahula.

As the drummer and founder of the **Malombo Jazz Makers**, Bahula helped to create some of the most exuberant and earthy township music of the 1960s and early 1970s, but, harassed and persecuted by the apartheid regime and fearing imminent imprisonment, he fled to London in 1973. Shortly before his death he struck licensing deals to make the Malombo back catalogue available again for the first time in decades and a trio of reissues of albums made in South Africa before he went into exile serve as a timely tribute to his memory.

Bahula and his Malombo Jazzmen, as the trio were originally known, won first prize at the Castle Lager Jazz festival in 1964 and a recording contract with Gallo followed. The group's 1966 debut ***Malompo Jazz*** (Strut ***) put his deep and sonorous *malombo* drums – traditionally used in tribal healing rituals – at the heart of the sound. Over his intricate, polyrhythmic patterns, Lucas 'Lucky' Ranku essays guitar solos that owed as much to the 1960s British 'beat boom' as to American jazz, and Abbey Cindi adds vaulting flute and some gritty harmonica. The album is primarily instrumental but Hilda Tloubatla of The Mahotella Queens adds her stirring vocals to one track. She reappears on the follow-up, 1967's ***Malombo Jazz Makers Vol 2*** (Strut ***), singing on two of the dozen numbers, which have grown bluesier and jazzier without losing the spare, raw charm of the group's debut. By the time of 1969's ***Down Lucky's Way*** (Tapestry Work ***) Cindi had added soprano saxophone to his repertoire and the band had expanded to a sextet with the addition of a bassist, a kit drummer and organist. The result is a fuller, more rounded sound in which Ranku really steals the show, adding sophisticated jazz chording to his earlier energetic riffing.



Mike Makhalemele

From the same milieu comes a trio of albums involving two of South Africa's finest sax players of the era. **Mike Makhalemele** was a force of nature (his nickname 'Ratau' translated as lion) and his 1975 solo debut ***The Peacemaker*** (We Are Busy Bodies ***) mixes classic township grooves with soul, funk and disco influences. **Winston Mankunku Ngozi**'s ***Alex Express*** (We Are Busy Bodies ***) on which he is backed by a band called **The Cliffs**, also appeared in 1975 and is a more mainstream jazz offering bearing the heavy influence of Coltrane. The following year the two saxophone titans came together to record the brilliant ***The Bull and the Lion*** (We Are Busy Bodies ****), an epic summit meeting that stands among the finest achievements in all of apartheid-era South African jazz.

Aiace
Eu Andava Como Se Fosse Voar

Aiace

★★★☆☆

A title that translates as 'I Walked as if I Were Flying' somehow suggests this north-eastern Brazilian singer's ambition both as artist and co-producer of her second solo album. "I relish the challenge of pushing my musical boundaries," the ex-Sertanília member suggests, "experimenting with different musical languages, and inviting artists with diverse expressions that may seem initially contrasting to my own." With a plethora of contributors and whether singing her own compositions or interpreting others', there is no lack of diversity here: Mestrinho's accordion invests 'Quando a Gente Se Vê' with distinct *baião* and *forró* generic traces; 'Toda Verdade Guarda Uma Mentira' rocks out after an ominous synth-charged introduction; and 'Ponha Colírio na Flor' serves light, bubbly samba-pop. The Afro-Bahian influence evident on, say, 'Se Você Se For / Citação: Meia Hora' and the MPB hallmark of songs like the opening 'Amarelocura' fuse winningly on 'Quando as Luzes se Apagam'. Quieter numbers like this and the atmospheric 'Jornada do Prazer', rather than the more overblown title-track, spotlight more distinctly a voice reminiscent at times of Marisa Monte. If Aiace stumbles occasionally as she walks on this engaging album, she takes flight often enough to suggest rich promise.

MARK SAMPSON

TRACK TO TRY *Quando as Luzes se Apagam*

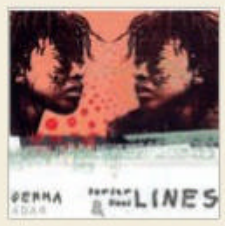
TOP OF THE WORLD

BUY NOW

Germa Adan
Borderlines & Bloodlines

Binding Thread Records

★★★★★



One of the standout folk albums of 2023 in the UK, which almost flew under the radar, Birmingham-based Germa Adan's *Borderlines & Bloodlines* is utterly beguiling. Bringing together her Haitian heritage (Adan was born in Haiti, grew up in Florida and lives in the UK) with West African instrumentation and musical concepts and a strong sense of British and American folk roots, it sounds unlike anything else out there. Anchored by Adan's intricate nylon guitar finger-picking, the real head turner is when her guitar blends with Senegalese *kora* playing from Kadialy Kouyate, or when her own fiddling sounds for all the world like West African fiddle. The global threads are strong on this album, and Adan's vision is inclusive for all, touching even on jazz with the inclusion of British trumpet player Xhosa Cole on the title-track. Adan sings mostly in Haitian Creole with some English, and writes songs in both languages. She covers Haitian songwriter Manno Charlemagne, and puts the poetry of Haitian poets Emmanuel W Védrine and Pierre-Richard Narcisse and American poet Audre Lorde to song. This is one of the most intriguing and self-assured albums of any year.

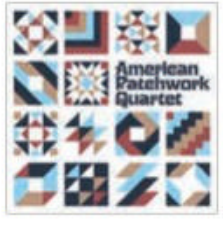
DEVON LÉGER

TRACK TO TRY *Borderlines & Bloodlines*

American Patchwork Quartet
American Patchwork Quartet

Carolina Jasmine

★★★★☆



The clue is in the name. This terrific quartet led by visionary roots guitarist/vocalist/arranger Clay Ross celebrate America's Indigenous folk heritage by embroidering 14 traditional songs with brave new multi-cultural threads to create a musical quilt of wonderfully diverse hues – rather like an American equivalent of what the late Simon Emmerson did for English folk music with The Imagined Village project.

A veteran musical adventurer who has twice won a Grammy for best regional roots album, Ross is joined here by jazz bassist Yasushi Nakamura, drummer Clarence Penn and the singer Falu Shah, who exudes star quality. On 'Beneath the Willow' she transports a Carter Family song halfway across the world with haunting Indian microtones. She then repeats the global migration to even greater effect on 'Wayfaring Stranger' before delivering a version of 'Shenandoah' as achingly beautiful as you're ever likely to hear. With its chiming guitars 'Pretty Saro' belongs in the same camp as The Byrds' reimagining of old folk songs while 'Soul of a Man' and 'John the Revelator' are radical reinventions of a brace of old blues songs by Blind Willie Johnson. From start to finish, it's all pretty much irresistible.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

TRACK TO TRY *Wayfaring Stranger*

Daniel Bachman
When the Roses Come Again

Three Lobed Recordings

★★★★☆

With *When the Roses Come Again*, finger-style guitarist extraordinaire Daniel Bachman has officially ventured beyond the local solar system and crossed into interstellar space where, like NASA's Voyager spacecraft, he is maintaining communication with fellow Earthlings. In contrast with 2022's *Almanac Behind*, which grimly charted rapid environmental change through a collage of field recordings and filtered instrumental tracks, *When the Roses Come Again* represents a decidedly more elegiac, poetical and frankly palatable sonic adventure.

Recorded on a laptop in a cabin Bachman was helping to restore in the Virginia woods, the album's 15 tracks are stitched together to form a sequential song cycle. Their titles, such as 'Neath the shadow, down the meadow', 'Someone straying, long delaying' and 'All their sadness turned to gladness', are taken from

Stephen Kopec

lyrics to the folk song 'When the Roses Come Again', released by the Carter Family in 1933, close to the beginning of their career. Using guitar, banjo, fiddle, homemade mouth bow, percussion pad and various electronic effects, Bachman improvised and then post-produced a patchwork quilt of beguiling melodies, frayed harmonies, ambient tonal colours and tranquilising rhythmic textures, augmented in parts by handbells and harmonium samples played by Tyler Magill. With a soundscape closer to Terry Riley than John Fahey, *When the Roses Come Again* is supremely habitable for fans of both artists.

DOUG DELOACH

TRACK TO TRY *Someone straying, long delaying*

El Clan Antillano
El Clan Antillano

Vampisoul

★★★☆☆

A lurid cover, featuring decor worthy of a dream sequence from David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*, is not the only distinguishing feature of Vampisoul's latest golden-era Colombian reissue. El Clan Antillano might have been short-lived – founded in 1975, they packed it in after two albums in 1977 – but they certainly knew how to mash-up their genres and cook up a tasty stew. The creation of the two hombres featured on the cover of this album, singer Jacky Carazo and Mike Char, a radio personality cum composer with a penchant for re-purposing foreign songs, the clan was supposedly '*comprised mostly of Fruko Y Sus Tesos band members*.'

This, their first album, has been enhanced with three bonus tracks taken from two rare 45rpm singles. Labelled '*heavy Colombian salsa*' by the publicity, it's the kind of Indigenous *porro* and *cumbia* flavours heard, for example, on the opening 'Donde 'sta? Donde 'sta?' and the following 'El Baile del Ratón' that give this salsa blend its distinctive local kick.

Puerto Rican rhythms feature on the terrific 'En la Oscuridad' and the Cortijo-associated 'El Negro Bembón'. Other highlights include a sparkling version of Eddie Palmieri's 'Mi Cumbia' and the sought-after bonus single 'Alma'.

MARK SAMPSON

TRACK TO TRY *Mi Cumbia*

Classico Latino & Fruko feat Omar Puente
Salsa Classics

Jazztone Studios

★★★★☆

Classico Latino is a London-based collective led by pianist Ivan Guevara and cellist Graham Walker, who co-founded the outfit back in 1997 after meeting at Cambridge University and bonding over a combined love for European classical music and the zinging sounds of Latin America. Over the years they have developed a fusion that honours both disciplines in ways subtle, exuberant and keenly balanced, lending their vital mix of piano, vocals, strings, bass and percussion to everything from compositions by Ernesto Lecuona, the 'Cuban Gershwin', to the oeuvre of Cuban salsa queen Celia Cruz, their line-up changing over the years but their quality remaining steadfast. This, their sixth studio album, finds them collaborating with Colombian multi-instrumentalist and salsa legend Fruko (Julio Ernesto Estrada) on tracks including his own carnivalesque, *sabor*-laden 'Barranquillero Arrebatao' and his 1981 smash hit 'El Son del Tren', its Spanish-language lyrics about the day-to-day struggles of workers as relevant as they ever were. London-based Cuban bassist Rey Crespo is a solid, reassuring presence throughout, but it's London-based violinist Omar Puente who makes the *boleros*, tangos and jaunty *joropos* soar. Highlights are many: the glorious instrumental 'El Caminante', once famously delivered by Joe Arroyo and Fruko, sprouts wings and flies. A danceathon beckons.

JANE CORNWELL

TRACK TO TRY *El Son del Tren*

Corn Nut Creek
Hearts in Bloom

Corn Nut Creek

★★★★☆

Hearts in Bloom is the smashing debut album by Corn Nut Creek, the collective sobriquet of American fiddler and vocalist Danielle Vita and Australian fiddler, banjoist and vocalist Tanya Bradley. As she often does live, Australian bassist and vocalist Kimberley Wheeler joins Vita and Bradley on most of the album's nine original songs, plus a cover of Kate Bush's 'Running Up That Hill'. With ▸

FEATURED REISSUE

Dorothy Carter
Waillee Waillee

Palto Flats / Putojefe Records

★★★★☆

Released in 1978, *Waillee Waillee* is the second full-length album from Dorothy Carter, composer, Mediæval Bæbes founder and master of the dulcimer, zither and psaltery. The record saw Carter exploring early and medieval music from across the continents through her own idiosyncratic style of experimentation. 45 years later, the album is getting a renaissance thanks to New York experimental label Palto Flats and Berlin's Putojefe Records. The release comes with lovingly compiled liner notes featuring contributions from family, close friends and collaborators, including Laraaji and Alexander Hacke of German industrial outfit Einstürzende Neubauten.

While experimental in style, *Waillee Waillee* holds a deep knowledge of and respect for the traditions it breaks with. Opener 'The Squirrel is a Funny Thing…' turns a whimsical US folk song into a sinister cut, full of tremulous strings and Carter's mercurial vocals shapeshifting between childlike sing-song and witch's hex.

Carter was a keen Celtic music historian, starting her love affair with strings as a student of the Irish harp before picking up the psaltery in the early 1960s. Her studies took her to music schools in London and Paris, and she read widely on the history of Celtic music and its techniques. Composed of three separate melodies, 'Celtic Medley' runs from the upbeat tinkling of Turlough O'Carolan's classic waltz, 'Planxty Irwin', played clear as a bell, through the yearning minor key change of Irish air, 'South Winds' and into the melancholic drones of Scottish border ballad 'The Lonely Glens Of Yarrow', borne along by a wash of reverberation and harmonic resonance.

It should be noted that Carter was far from quiet and bookish. Her international escapades featured psychedelic investigations in Maine, deckhanding on a Mississippi steamboat and religious visions with an anarchist monk in northern Mexico. Her adventures would eventually lead her into the path of Robert Rutman, one of her most prolific collaborators, who's invention, the steel cello, underpins many of the songs on *Waillee Waillee*. On 'Summer Rhapsody', the elephantine drone of Rutman's instrument provides the trellis around which Carter's melodies coil, blossoming from pattering plinks to loops of complex fingerwork. On 'Tree of Life', the cello appears almost horn-like, announcing the arrival of Carter's honeyed scales and sylph-like vocals.

Her remarkable life aside, it is Carter's power and precision on her instruments that is her most prevailing legacy. Her virtuoso talent matched with her curiosity for tradition and her desire to play and experiment with her practice, make this a record perplexing and pleasurable in equal measure. As her daughter, Celeste, writes in the liner notes, '*music was her true passion and everyone who heard it knew it. Take time to see beauty and enjoy Dorothy's music.*'

OLIVIA CHEVES

TRACK TO TRY *Tree of Life*

the sort of simpatico interplay that only comes with deep knowledge and careful listening, Corn Nut Creek mine the peculiar colours, textures and themes of Appalachian music, which, according to the artists, include '*the divinity within the natural world and our unique connection to it*.' All well and good, metaphysically speaking, but what sets Corn Nut Creek apart from other skilled interpreters of Appalachian, Americana and other roots styles is their imaginative arrangements, rhapsodic lyrics and the rarefied nature of their voices, especially when conjoined in two- and three-part harmonies. The beautiful melody of 'Limbs' is rendered in delicate, singular lyrical lines punctuated by exquisite harmonic exultations. Similarly, 'I Choose You' shimmers with solo and group vocals accented. It's a brilliant listen.

DOUG DELOACH

TRACK TO TRY *Limbs*

Amaro Freitas
Y'Y

Psychic Hotline

★★★★★

Those who have been to the Amazon find it deeply affecting, coming away with a desire to contribute in some way, or to at least spread the word. Although Freitas is originally from Recife, a town in Brazil's northeast with a deeply ingrained music culture, for this release he was drawn to Manaus, the city deep inside the Amazon basin, to let its rhythms accompany his superbly played piano. The first half plays as a suite in homage to Amazonian spirits, with tracks bleeding into each other and Freitas' piano running like a stream over smoothed pebbles of percussion in tribute to the much-missed Naná Vasconcelos ('Viva Naná'), the piece climaxing with the pounding 'Dança dos Martelos'. The second half shows Freitas has truly entered the international scene as he is joined by peers Hamid Drake on drums, Jeff Parker on guitar and the currently ubiquitous Shabaka Hutchings, who plays the flute, having recently given up his saxophone. 'Mar de Cirandeiras', inspired by the traditional circular *ciranda* dance, echoes with beautifully plucked guitar by Parker and the album ends with the tour de force of 'Encantados', the ensemble celebrating the African diaspora with an international crossover.

ANDY CUMMING

TRACK TO TRY *Encantados*

Fabiano Do Nascimento
Mundo Solo

Far Out Recordings

★★★☆☆

I have been an admirer of the prolific Brazilian guitarist and composer Fabiano Do Nascimento for several years. Based in Los Angeles, his previous albums such as *Dança do Tempo* (2015) and *Tempo dos Mestres* (2017) highlighted his remarkable skills, and an ability to seamlessly weave in and around his musical roots.

On *Mundo Solo*, Do Nascimento '*adopt[ed] Hermeto Pascoal's concept of Universal Music*' in order to try and express all of his musical influences at once. This sees him playing a variety of guitars, including six-, seven- and ten-strings, alongside a host of pedals and synthesisers. As much as I love Hermeto Pascoal, and as much as I enjoyed several tracks on *Mundo Solo* on an individual basis – the deliciously buzzy 'Paperstrings', for example – I personally struggled to enjoy it as one connected entity. For me, the album feels too much like a portfolio of influences that haven't yet been coherently pieced together, while the inclusion of synthesizers on tracks like 'Agua de Estrellas' and 'Coisa' dilute rather than strengthen. Once again, Do Nascimento's musical brilliance burns brightly, but *Mundo Solo*'s finest moments are its most stripped-down.

MERLYN DRIVER

TRACK TO TRY *Tempo*

Dt/Ig
Some Day

Slow and Steady Music

★★★☆☆

Dt/Ig is an instrumental duo formed by Drew Taubenfeld, a multi-instrumentalist and music director who has collaborated with Dwight Yoakam, Selena Gomez, Lil Nas X and Meghan Trainor; and Isaiah Gage, a cellist and songwriter-composer-arranger whose credits include scores for TV and film (*The Good Fight*, *Arrested Development*, *Dear White People*), as well as playing and recording with Pharell Williams, Adele, Jennifer Lopez, Ringo Starr and Paul McCartney. Conjured from an alchemical blend of Americana, classical chamber, folk, rock and pop, songs such as 'Ramborino,' 'Rainy Day', 'Poppyseeds' and the title-track showcase Dt/Ig's exceptional technical facility on cello, pedal steel, nylon string guitar, trumpet, clarinet, piano and drums. An unusual pairing of cello and pedal steel imbues 'Berlin Swans' with elegantly intense emotional power. 'Spiders', a densely packed dialogue between cello and guitar, zigs, zags and twists around in an intimate space. 'Celli Prototype', as advertised, provides Gage with an opportunity to convey the stately eloquence and somber fluidity of his instrument. Given Dt/Ig's industry experience, it's no coincidence that much of *Some Day* sounds like the main theme or underscoring of a television or film production. Happily, in this case, that's not a bad thing.

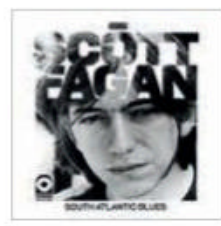
DOUG DELOACH

TRACK TO TRY *Ramborino*

Scott Fagan
South Atlantic Blues

Earth Records

★★★★☆



South Atlantic Blues was first released in 1968, at the same time as Van Morrison's *Astral Weeks*. While Morrison's album went on to achieve 'classic' status, Fagan's disappeared without trace. Fagan was unlucky; his chaotic childhood took him from New York to the Puerto Rican slum. He eventually made it back to New York in time to catch the 1960s Greenwich Village scene but lost out to James Taylor when The Beatles' Apple Records were looking to sign a new singer-songwriter. Neither *South Atlantic Blues* nor his subsequent Broadway rock-opera attracted ▸

Helder Tavares

LOS ROMEROS

THE MERCURY MASTERS

Decca Classics proudly unveils The Complete Mercury recordings of LOS ROMEROS, the 'Royal Family of the Guitar.' This limited-edition box set, features remastered quartet recordings, iconic Flamenco performances, and the 1960 Contemporary Records albums. Dive into six decades of timeless virtuosity, complemented by liner notes from Walter Aaron Clark and Thomas Fine. Celebrate the legacy of Los Romeros, honored with the Recording Academy President's Merit Award. Don't miss this extraordinary musical journey captured in a deluxe, illustrated box set.

ORDER NOW

deccaclassics.com

Always have mental health support in your pocket.

Add Music Minds Matter to your contacts today:

0808 802 8008

Music Minds Matter offers free, 24/7 mental health support to everyone working in the music industry.

Music Minds Matter

Registered Charity No. 1199795

From Help Musicians

Subscribe to SONGLINES

magsubscriptions.com/music-songlines

subscriptions@markallengroup.com

+44 (0) 1722 716 997

Your essential guide to the best music from around the world

Songlines is the definitive magazine for world music – music that has its roots in all parts of the globe, from Mali to Mexico, India to Iraq. Whether this music is defined as traditional, contemporary, folk or fusion, *Songlines* is the only publication to truly represent and embrace it.

Why should you subscribe?

- 10 new issues each year delivered straight to your door
- Subscriber-only CD or track downloads with every issue, featuring the best music from around the world
- Expert music reviews and global dispatches
- Access to every issue in our digital archive and 7,500+ album reviews in our online database

From £58 a year

Discover the world through music

Subscribe today at magsubscriptions.com/music-songlines

Stated subscription rate based on Annual Direct Debit payment. Annual subscription rate by credit or debit card is £61.00 for Print; £61.00 for Digital; £61.00 for Reviews; £83 for Digital Club; or £105 for Full Club. Postage and packaging is not included for overseas orders and will be applied at checkout.

For access to the reviews database and digital archive, subscribe to our Full Club or Digital Club packages.

success. Even on its 2015 reissue, the album went under the radar.

The opening tracks are magnificent, with lavish brass and strings arrangements. 'In My Head' with its Righteous Brothers vibe, the shuffling 'Nickels and Dimes' and 'Crying', with its baritone guitar dripping with tremolo, could have been written for Dusty Springfield. Fagan's impassioned vocal sounds uncannily like David Bowie and his lyrics are strikingly original ('*the poor man's got no gods at all, not counting alcohol*').

Reissued now for a second time, *South Atlantic Blues*, remains an enjoyable, bittersweet encapsulation of 1968.

TONY GILLAM

TRACK TO TRY *In My Head*

Jim Kweskin
Never Too Late: Duets with My Friends

StorySound Records

★★★☆☆

In 1960s America, you couldn't enter a coffee house without running into a malcontent folk singer with a ratty guitar hellbent on ridding the world of tyrannical evil. Contrarily, Jim Kweskin & The Jug Band took it upon themselves to reimagine the jug band sound of the 1920s while drawing upon early American styles from Appalachian country and Tin Pan Alley tunes to ragtime, jazz and blues. Six decades later, *Never Too Late: Duets with My Friends* features the 83-year-old troubadour accompanied by some of his most cherished female collaborators performing selections from the same songbook that supplied The Jug Band with its material.

By applying equal doses of nostalgic playfulness and regenerative creativity, Kweskin and former Jug Band regular Maria Muldaur (of 'Midnight at the Oasis' fame) burnish 'The Sheik of Araby' and 'Let's Get Happy Together' with period-era swing and polyphonic harmony. Fiona Kweskin makes her recording debut on *Never Too Late*, charmingly crooning alongside her grandfather on 'You're Just in Love', 'Side by Side' and 'What Does the Deep Sea Say'. Keeping with the mostly female theme, Kweskin's supporting cast features fiddler Suzy Thompson, dobro and steel guitarist Cindy Cashdollar and harmonica player Annie Raines.

DOUG DELOACH

TRACK TO TRY *Let's Get Happy Together (with Maria Muldaur)*

TOP OF THE WORLD

BUY NOW

La Muchacha & El Propio Junte
Los Ombligos

Sello In-Correcto

★★★★★

A surprising yet pleasurable departure from La Muchacha's usual singer-guitarist soloist style, *Los Ombligos* is the new musical undertaking from Colombia's much-loved social commentator.

La Muchacha (Isabel Ramírez Ocampo) has joined forces with El Propio Junte (Miguel Velásquez Matjasevic on double bass and Camilo Bartelsman on percussion) to transport her style into a newly developed collective sound while still staying true to the political poetic musings of her musical activism. La Muchacha's music has become the alternative soundtrack of resistance for many across Colombia, with *Los Ombligos* set to be no different. With the introduction of new harmonies and more dissonance, giving the album a slightly darker tone than the artist's previous works, *Los Ombligos* is a testament to La Muchacha's new style and expedition with El Propio Junte.

Across the entire album, and especially in pieces such as 'El Ofendío', 'Triste Serenata' and 'Lárgueme', key societal issues of modern Colombia, such as patriarchal violence, state corruption and inequality, are elegantly presented. These are delicate themes but they are wrapped up here in the usual La Muchacha genius of poetic protest, flair and intelligent musicality.

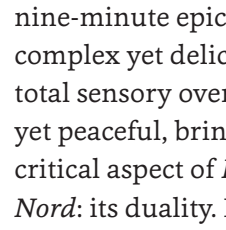
JENNA MACKLE

TRACK TO TRY *Parafina*

Nordri
Échos des Mers du Nord

Nordri

★★★★★



Considering their deep and mutual love for Nordic music, it's not hard to see why Québécois foursome Nordri's debut, *Échos des Mers du Nord*, is as shimmering as it is. Featuring a line-up of Anne-Hélène Chevrette on violin, David Jacques on baroque guitar (a guitar professor at Laval University), Sylvain Neault on violin and mandolin (he's a guitar teacher at Laval, too), and Ian Simpson on double bass, Nordri's debut is not only brimming with delightful tracks but there's talent here for days. The result is that tracks like 'Hommage à Vigneault', which harbors stunning and masterful interplay between Neault's mandolin and Jacques' guitar, and 'Avant le Départ', with its delicate moodiness, are just the beginning.

Nordri's finest hour (thus far) may well be 'Festoyer Jusqu'à l'Aube', a track that showcases the grandeur of this four-piece via an almost nine-minute epic journey through complex yet delicate sounds akin to total sensory overload. It's blissful yet peaceful, bringing us to the most critical aspect of *Échos des Mers du Nord*: its duality. It's all too easy these days to make a one-trick-pony affair, but Nordri aren't built to be boring.

Simply put, there's too much talent, diversity and inherent curiosity teeming throughout the group's ranks to conjure anything but masterstrokes capable of reminding listeners of the long-forgotten magic that Swedish-infected Nordic music contains. Recorded at Studio Sonomax, with Mathieu Laprise twirling the knobs, *Échos des Mers du Nord* has something here for everyone: dance, rhythm-based acoustic music, or self-assured, jaw-dropping instrumentals. Pick this one up. You won't be sorry.

ANDREW DALY

TRACK TO TRY *Festoyer Jusqu'à l'Aube'*

barbican

Songlines @25

A special anniversary concert with an extraordinary line-up celebrating 25 years of Songlines

Experience the best music from around the world – with Salif Keita, Mamadou Diabaté, Le Vent Du Nord, Divanhana and Balimaya Project.

Mon 25 Mar **barbican.org.uk**

Levi S Davis

Q&A

Clark Tenakhongva

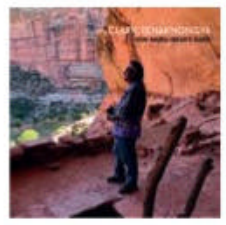
Could you tell us a little about the Hopi and your upbringing? I was born and raised here on the Hopi Reservation [in north-eastern Arizona, US], my home village is Hotevilla, one of the 12 villages the Hopi people reside in. My first language has always been Hopi, writing and speaking English is at times difficult. How many face this dilemma is different today, the language is getting lost with the pressure of speaking English only, and we are losing fluent speakers daily. I'm now 66, I received my education here on Hopi, served in the US Army, then came home and restarted my life and engagement into being a Hopi first, then an American. It's been a tough journey with many obstacles. I'm a simple man, I continue with the traditional dry farming, livestock ranching. I'm a self-taught artist and continue with my culture of song-making for ceremonies and participation. I pray for world peace, harmony, understanding, happiness, enhancement in life. The songs on the album are my gift to the world.

What can you tell us about the songs on the album, and how they were composed? All the songs on the album are composed by me, from personal experience learning the language, songs, teachings and knowledge from my grandparents, uncles, parents and elders. I have to say this type of singing is not of current dances or ceremonial use. Imagine yourself sitting in a dwelling at Bears Ears hearing a person singing in this style, with the percussion of clay pots, rasping gourds and the Hopi long flute accompanying the serenade. They are 100% Hopi, all composed in our language, and highlight our lives connected to nature, land, universe and beyond.

Clark Tenakhongva
Hon Muru (Bears Ears)

Öngtupqa Music

★★★★½



The landscape of the Southwestern United States is at the heart of this new recording by Hopi singer Clark Tenakhongva. As rugged as the land of its people, the Hopi language, Hopílavayi, conjures images and stories from time immemorial. Supported here by Gary Stroutsos playing the *leena*, a Hopi long flute, supposedly the oldest known wind instrument in North America, and subtle organic percussion provided by Matt Moon Nelson, Tenakhongva's chants often morph into incantations, creating a trance-like experience. Exquisitely recorded, the album's sequencing allows for breathing thanks to three instrumental tracks, strategically placed. If the stunning beauty of the numerous canyons and *mesa* tops of Bears Ears is not available to you, this album by a respected singer and traditional cultural practitioner is your closest entry into this sacred cultural landscape. Mineral music of aerial transcendence.

MARC FOURNIER

TRACK TO TRY *Kaah'wayii'sii'*

Jorge López Ruiz
Un Hombre de Buenos Aires

Altercat

★★★★★

Jazz and tango had parallel evolutions, emerging in marginalised areas, gravitating to their respective centres and then going global. When the lines crossed in Buenos Aires, the tango edge usually faced upwards. On *Un Hombre de Buenos Aires*, re-released by Altercat, bassist and bandleader Jorge López Ruiz – an underrated giant of Río de la Plata jazz, as influential locally as Piazzolla or Gato Barbieri – works in folk motifs, *bossa* vibes, funk-inflected rhythms and classical strains. The album was first released in 1978 as the Argentinian capital approached its 400th anniversary, but it's an ambivalent, tense homage to the city: on previous albums, López Ruiz had spoken out against the military junta that was abducting citizens and murdering them. Its five tracks explore five resonating themes – the cry, nostalgia, joy, petition and farewell of man – for which, read: Buenos Aires and/or wider humanity. There is fierce, but controlled, emotion throughout and a captivating play-off between tango melodies, a cinematic treatment – López Ruiz was a prolific composer of soundtracks – and the ethereal Pearl & Dean scats of singing ensemble Buenos Aires 8. A line-up including Dino Saluzzi, Pablo Ziegler, Hector Console and Antonio Agri ensures mesmerism. Altercat has also reissued two other must-have López Ruiz masterpieces: *Viejas Raíces* and the impassioned *Bronca Buenos Aires*.

CHRIS MOSS

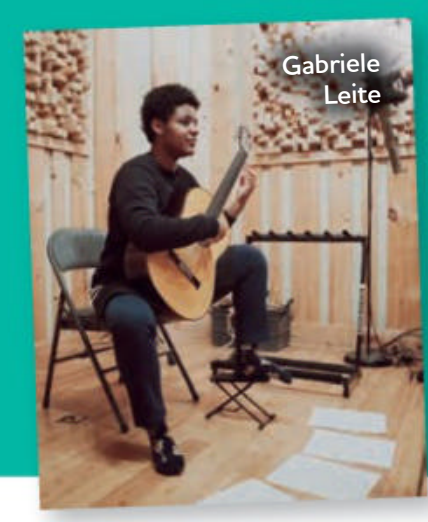
TRACK TO TRY *El Grito del Hombre*

BRAZIL *by Andy Cumming*

Os Barbapapas' first studio album ***Enigma*** (Fun in the Church ***) could be brushed off as a tropical take on space age *exotica*, but there's much more to it than that, with influences ranging from eastern rhythms to Ethiopian jazz. There's also the ethereal sound of the distinctive glass harp, '*water-tuned glasses running through a wah-wah and other pedals*,' that give the album an otherworldly touch. You can find some tasty Afro-Latin swing on 'Caminho Para Itiwawa' and there's a clear nod to Ry Cooder on album closer 'Yucumã', making this an intriguing mix of genres.

The soundtrack to ***O Esquadrão Da Morte*** (Mr Bongo ***) by **Zé Rodrix & A Agência de Mágicos** is a lot of fun with wild exploitation-style jazzy breaks, chase-scene funk and psychedelic freakouts. Zé Rodrix has written songs covered by Quarteto Em Cy and Elis Regina to name just a few. He was a member of proggers Som Imaginário and even played piano and synth on Secos & Molhados' classic 1973 album. This curiosity, while not reaching those dizzy heights, does have its moments with some fine synth playing and 'Motoqueiros' is a curious wig-out that turns into a brassy big band rocker. Moreover, the extremely lurid cover combined with this psychotronic music makes me very curious to see the film (which I'm sure is terrible).

Gabriele Leite comes from very humble origins, and to break into the world of classical instrumentation is no mean feat, to do it with international acclaim is even more remarkable. ***Territórios*** (Rocinante ***) is a superbly produced piece of instrumental guitar music.


Gabriele Leite

I was particularly taken with 'Sonata', composed by Sergio Assad, wherein you can hear elements of *bossa nova* and even *música caipira*, the roots genre from the countryside. It's always a pleasure to hear interpretations of Heitor Villa-Lobos' work and 'Melodia Sentimental' is rightly romantic and swooning.

More easily recognisable as Brazilian with its roots in samba and bossa nova is ***Elefante*** (YB Music ****) by **Rodrigo Campos & Romulo Fróes**, two fine indie *sambistas*, who make their delicate songwriting seem easy. This is a stripped-down, melancholic and existential portrayal of life in concrete-grey São Paulo, though Campos adds some brightness with his *cavaquinho* strums on 'Ela, Primeira'. The saxophone of Metá Metá's Thiago França adds some grimy urban textures on 'Ladeira' and the double bass of Marcelo Cabral is always welcome with his abstract rumbles. If you don't know the work of these two composers, this is well worth your time.

XOCÔ is newcomer Mestre Sérgio Xocolate who mixes traditional northeastern Afro-Indigenous Brazilian rhythms with rock on ***XOCÔ*** (Lulaworld ***). Xocolate is a master teacher of *capoeira* and an arts educator with a penchant for composing songs on the streetcar in Toronto, Canada. The result is an enthusiastic romp-along mixture of Luiz Gonzaga with a soloing rock guitarist at the helm. Who knew that songs that regale tales of the *sertão* needed squealing guitar solos as in 'Capoeira Blues', while 'Côco' has an enthusiastic shouty chorus that is enjoyable? That being said, I have a sneaking suspicion that Nação Zumbi did this far more effectively 25 years ago.

Tom-Ambroise Fenaille

Mari Boine
Gula Gula

By Norse

★★★★★

Fragile, urgent and strong, *Gula Gula* reveals itself within the first 20 seconds of the title-track as one of the most powerful and important albums of our time: there's an intake of breath, then Boine's hushed tones, rapidly crescendoing, gritty and purposeful, with a mysterious and compelling beauty. First released in 1989 before being issued by Peter Gabriel's Real World label, it kick-started Boine's exceptional worldwide career as a singer and composer whose music is rooted in her Sámi ancestry and its struggles, underpinned by the human spirit and nature, and the traditions of vocal *joik*.

Now, *Gula Gula* has been re-released. Time has made it only more vigorous and deeply relevant: '*Hear the voices of the foremothers, why do you allow the earth to be polluted and poisoned?*' The Sámi language is so musical and Boine makes it purr; it's percussive and earthy, fluid and lyrical.

There are tracks that are desperately heartbreaking ('Balu Badjel Go Vuoittán') and witty ('Oppskrift for Herrefolk'), and throughout, (including two bonus tracks from the original sessions), there are reminders of the thrill of Boine and her band live in concert still spreading their eagle wings across the world. A legendary singer, a legendary album.

FIONA TALKINGTON

TRACK TO TRY *Gula Gula*

Alba Careta & Henrio
Udolç

Segell Microscopi

★★★★½

The Càntut collection is a project dedicated to collecting and disseminating music orally transmitted in the region of Girona, in Spanish Catalonia, passed on by older generations to newer ones. From that immense archive that preserves more than 1,700 audio or video songs, a series of records has been born, helping to let the world in on this little secret. *Udolç* is the third album of the Càntut collection, and after two other duos worked on their selection of songs from this oral tradition, it is time for Alba Careta & Henrio to charmingly address this songbook. And what a precious record their voices and Careta's trumpet make together on *Udolç*, where they have narrowed their scope to Girona's lullabies. Alba Careta comes from a jazz background, Henrio is a folk singer and songwriter, and much praise is due to whoever thought of joining them for this record. Their velvety voices are a stunning match. Just listen to 'La Mare de Déu' or 'Angelina', Careta coming out as a female Chet Baker or a Silvia Pérez Cruz follower, Henrio sounding like a Catalan Jeff Buckley. They are briefly accompanied by Enric Casasses' poems on a couple of tracks, although it is their work around trumpet, guitar and voices that is truly magic.

The way they whisper these melodies and follow on a trail porous to both jazz and folk brings to mind The Unthanks. But there is something unique, lovely and almost invisible happening here too.

GONÇALO FROTA

TRACK TO TRY *Angelina*

Fränder
II

Nordic Notes

★★★½☆

Is prog folk a genre? Then Swedish band Fränder may be a fit, with their mix of bombastic vocals, heavy clashing arrangements and operatic aesthetics. They list influences like Led Zeppelin and Jethro Tull and have a decidedly 70s sound, with the heavy, almost overwrought arrangement on a song like 'En Sommarkväll' reminding of a time when bands holed up for weeks in the studio crafting baroque worlds around their music. Other tracks, like 'Rabatud', are more anchored in traditional melody, even though this tune was composed by Säde Tatar, the band's Estonian member. Estonian folk music is key to this album, from Tatar's bagpipe playing on 'Tid Att Komma Hem' to the traditional Estonian song 'Õhtu Õrna'.

A true family band, Fränder are anchored around brothers Gabbi and Daniel Dluzewski and sister Natasja Dluzewska who hail from the tiny ancient viking village of Håga near Uppsala. Also joining the band is percussionist Björn Tollin, a founding member of Hedningarna. Tollin's presence here is interesting, as the album harkens back to the glory days of Nordic roots music in the 90s. Dense with flute, fiddle and the crashing strings of the Swedish *låtmandola*, *II* is drenched in the ambience of old Scandinavia.

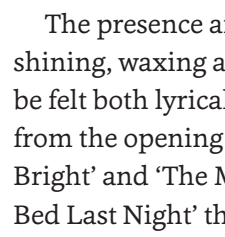
DEVON LÉGER

TRACK TO TRY *Tid Att Komma Hem*

The Furrow Collective
We Know by the Moon

Hudson Records

★★★★½



The Anglo-Scottish quartet celebrate a decade of music making with their fourth album, *We Know by the Moon*. Emily Portman, Lucy Farrell, Alasdair Roberts and Rachel Newton are brilliant solo artists in their own right, so when they record and perform as The Furrow Collective, it is wise listeners that bend an ear.

It's an album for the winter months, for long dark nights. '*The moon, the stars, darkness and night are threads woven through these songs*,' the band say. '*Songs to be listened to after dark, by candlelight, firelight, or under the cold, steady light of our constant lunar companion.*' Produced by Andy Bell, *We Know by the Moon* is lit up by stark musical and lyrical contrasts, the songs ranging from Burns' 'O, Wert Thou in the Cauld Blast; through Schubert's 'The Hurdy Gurdy Man' from *Winterreisse* to the ghost ballad 'The Wife of Usher's Well'.

The presence and influence of the shining, waxing and waning moon can be felt both lyrically and musically, from the opening 'The Moon Shines Bright' and 'The Moon Shined on My Bed Last Night' through to the closing 'O Watch the Stars', while the likes of 'The Wild Wild Berry' are scored by haunted, distorted guitar and drones that seem to emanate from space.

TIM CUMMING

TRACK TO TRY *The Wife of Usher's Well*

Gentle Stranger
Inner Winter

PRAH Recordings / Double Dare

★★★★½

On previous full-lengths Gentle Stranger have lived up to their self-proclaimed '*post-clown*' cabaret tag by diligently committing themselves to a ragbag of ostentatious styles like some theatrical, curmudgeonly cross between The Divine Comedy and Sun City Girls. But Inner Winter finds duo Alex McKenzie and Tom Hardwick-Allan opting for a refreshingly cohesive approach with an embroidery of minimalist, melancholic folk tunes and strident Gaelic psalmody, connected by transitional interludes of mood-setting field recordings, static-saturated EVP broadcasts and monolithic Phill Niblock-inspired drones. Sorrowful recollections filtered through the prism of childhood innocence ('Inner Winter') and an old AutoTuned avian-tragedy ('Kestrel (feat Martha Skye Murphy)') permeate the frosty-fingered tapestry, drawing from the same hauntological wellspring as McKenzie's other tradition-twisting outfit, Shovel Dance Collective. Particularly poignant is 'Two to Carry', Hardwick-Allan dolefully revisiting an ill-fated heavy-lifting mission from Gentle Stranger's *Love and Unlearn*, accompanied by strikingly spare piano chords and guest Martha Skye Murphy's spectral coo. Jesters' tears have rarely tasted so sweet.

SPENCER GRADY

TRACK TO TRY *Two to Carry (feat Martha Skye Murphy)*

Nick Hart & Tom Moore
The Colour of Amber

Slow Worm Records

★★★★½

Following his terrific *Nick Hart Sings...* series, award-winning folk singer, musician and steward of English folk song Hart returns in a collaboration with the equally gifted Tom Moore on the rather gorgeous *The Colour of Amber*. Comprising ten traditional songs and tunes, the majority familiar to folk audiences, Hart and Moore skilfully deliver a listening experience which highlights the vitality, pliability and sheer pleasure of English folk song (with Scottish tune 'Flowers of Edinburgh' thrown in for good measure). Harmonium, viola and voice are the key sounds on a tour through familiar folk songs and tunes, including 'The Raggle Taggle Gypsies', 'Bold Riley' and 'Swaggering Boney'. *The Colour of Amber* continues that long tradition of trad folk reinvention which cleverly explores the original song but finds room to mine notes and echoes from more recent practitioners – the influence of Martin Carthy is evident on 'Three Jolly Sneaksmen' and 'The Jolly Bold Robber' generously incorporates elements from John Kirkpatrick's version. Hart and Moore are masters of their game, adeptly

breathing new life into the familiar with an enchanting and atmospheric purity. Rarely do interpretations of traditional folk reach such astuteness and engagement. The result is nothing short of superb.

BILLY ROUGH

TRACK TO TRY *Three Jolly Sneaksmen*

Seán Heely
Dramagical

Seán Heely

★★★★½

Seán Heely is a young fiddle player and Gaelic singer based in Washington, DC who is a US National Scottish Fiddle Champion, as a well as a classical violinist. His repertoire draws on Scottish as well as Irish traditions, and *Dramagical* is his third album, focusing on the dramatic and magical aspects of Gaelic music, with the intention, he says, of transporting listeners into the '*otherworld*' of the Celtic tradition.

Heely was on the Isle of Skye when the concept took shape – guided by one of his mentors, Irish-American fiddler Liz Carroll. Augmenting his own playing is The Seán Heely Celtic Band, an eight-piece comprising piano, guitar, *bouzouki*, *bodhrán*, harmonium, percussions and cello.

Amid the tunes, songs of death and the '*otherworld*' rear their heads, such as 'The Twa Corbies', a stark, spare, unrelenting ballad in which two carrion ponder which fresh corpse to feast upon. The epic, nine-minute 'Cernunnos : An Dia Adharcach (The Horned God)' is a highlight, with Heely playing solo, evoking the mysterious antlered god of nature and fertility, whose mythology is embedded in the ancient Celtic and Gallo-Roman world of Iron Age Europe. Here, you feel your ear is pressed to the heart and soul of Heely's '*dramagical*' world.

TIM CUMMING

TRACK TO TRY *Cernunnos : An Dia Adharcach*

TOP OF THE WORLD

BUY NOW

Dina Ögon
Orion

Playground Music

★★★★½

Orion is the third album from Scandinavian soul group Dina Ögon (Your Eyes). What do they sound like? Well, this doesn't really do their originality any justice, but imagine a Swedish Joni Mitchell joining Khruangbin as a vocalist, then add a sprinkling of 1970s pop shimmer, and you won't be far off. Much of the band's identity comes from the distinctive vocals of Anna Ahnlund, who sings in Swedish.

Orion starts in a blaze of glory with one of the catchiest songs I've heard this year – 'Jag Vill Ha Allt'. It is quite simply a Rolls Royce (or perhaps an upgraded Volvo) of a pop song – elegant, timeless, and precisely engineered. There are other catchy songs on the album – 'Det Läcker' being a case in point – but for me 'Jag Vill Ha Allt' is somehow a perfect amalgamation of all the things that Dina Ögon do well. Another favourite is the odd 'Firad', which feels like it's tilting at the slightest of angles.

Dina Ögon's overall sound may not change much, but with compositions this strong, *Orion* drifts magnificently, like a bloom of translucent jellyfish floating through Scandinavian summer waters.

MERLYN DRIVER

TRACK TO TRY *Jag Vill Ha Allt*

The Henry Girls
A Time to Grow

The Henry Girls

★★★½☆

Mikael Kenta

The Breath's Ríoghnach Connolly guests on this album from the folk trio from Inishowen in northern Donegal, alongside sisters Karen, Lorna and Joleen McLaughlin, whose vocal harmonies are augmented by fiddles, ukulele, banjo, guitar, harp, mandolin, piano and accordion. It's 20 years since they released their debut, *Between Us*, and six years since their last album, *Far Beyond the Stars*. Recorded at Attica Audio studios in rural Donegal, the sisters' celestial vocal harmonies on the likes of 'Where are We Now' are delicious, while 'Not Your Fight' features Ríoghnach Connolly, and was born from a writing collaboration between Connolly and Karen McLaughlin when the former was artist-in-residence at the Nerve Centre in Derry.

To follow, the moody instrumental 'Inghinidhe na hÉireann' is a cinematic, piano-and fiddles-led tune, its title drawn from Yeats' muse Maud Gonne's radical Irish nationalist women's movement. To follow, 'Colours in the Sky' mines the seam of the McLaughlin sisters' Americana influences, sounding sweet and untroubled, while 'Winter's Day' employs a woozy rhythm track and spectral guitar lines set against the sisters' vocals, and album closer 'Don't Fear the Night' has an old-time feel, and a sweetness that ensures all fears fly away.

TIM CUMMING

TRACK TO TRY *Not Your Fight (with Ríoghnach Connolly)*

Hirondelle
Hirondelle

Hirondelle

★★★☆☆

Hirondelle is an unlikely cohort of Northumbrian, Scottish and Provençal musicians with a just as improbable fascination for the Occitan culture that stretches from France and Spain via Monaco to Italy. Led by English folk duo The Brothers Gillespie, the ensemble also includes the classically-accented Trio Mythos – Sophie Renshaw (viola), Lucy Russell (violin) and Ruth Phillips (cello) – and, singing in Provençal dialect, the polyphonic trio Tant Que Li Siam, where Damien Toumi, Marie-Madeleine Martinet and Mario Leccia share vocal and percussion duties. It's a sound that makes a concerted, if not always persuasive, claim for attention. There is much admirable musicianship on show, evidenced by the beautifully blended but bittersweet close-harmonies of the regret-filled 'I Drew My Ship' and the striking authenticity of the Provençal-derived instruments in the traditional chanson, 'La Roumanço de Peire D'Aragoun'.

The tone throughout is decidedly mellow, the twinned 'Northumberland I' and 'Northumberland II' as plaintive as they are poetic. With Renshaw's crafted string arrangements binding everything together, the dominating balefulness that colours tone and temperament eventually casts its own, satisfyingly dark shade. Tim Lane's cosseting production makes its own contribution to proceedings, clothing the whole album in an alluring and intimate atmosphere.

MICHAEL QUINN

TRACK TO TRY *I Drew My Ship*

ØXN
CYRM

Claddagh Records

★★★★★

In January 2021, Lankum's Radie Peat and drone-folk artist Katie Kim hosted a livestream featuring heavy arrangements of traditional tales to celebrate Nollaig na mBan ('Women's Christmas' in Ireland). The rhythm section was provided by Ellie Myler (drums) and John 'Spud' Murphy (bass), two-thirds of Irish experimentalists Percolator, and, in Murphy's case, producer of both Lankum and Kim. Songs from that session appear now on *CYRM*, the debut of ØXN, the quartet's formalised manifestation. Opener 'Cruel Mother' sees Peat's distinct vocals enter a capella, invoking the story of a woman left pregnant and persecuted after a relationship with a married man, before Kim, Myler and Murphy gradually add their instruments and voices to the fray. 'The Trees They Do Grow High' sees Kim take the lead, with a haunting account of medieval child marriage, built against a swarm of drones and sinister strings. 'The Wife of Michael Cleary' is a doom-laden dirge of Maija Sofia's 2019 telling of the unfortunate tale of Bridget Cleary, burned alive by her husband for fear of her being a fairy. Between the drones, drums and stories being sung, *CYRM* is a work of ferocious, gut-wrenching, obliterating power.

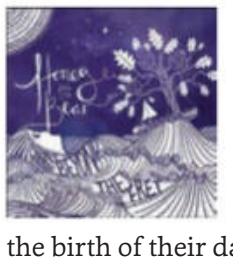
OLIVIA CHEVES

TRACK TO TRY *The Trees They Do Grow High*

Honey & The Bear
Away Beyond the Fret

Honey & The Bear

★★★☆☆



East Anglian husband and wife duo Lucy and Jon Hart have coincided their third album with the birth of their daughter. This significant detail and the title, meaning beyond the sea mist, suggest optimism and positivity and this is immediately present in opener 'Dear Grandmother', a bright, *bouzouki*-led number exploring the miracle of human reproduction. Although Lucy is a great singer and both are stellar musicians, at points the vocals and arrangements flirt with tweeness. Despite this, there can be no denying that the music they produce is of high quality, and intelligent, with the complexity present on their first two albums continuing here. 'Over Land Over Sea' is a good example of this, a dramatic maritime tale with an edge of darkness creeping from the percussion and guitar lines.

Elsewhere, the miniature 'Do You Keep It Underneath' is wonderful; a smuggler tune played to just minimal percussion, this sinister little number is bang in the middle of the set and my pick. The restraint on this song is less present on pieces like 'Finn's Jig', which gets a bit too swashbuckling, but songs like 'The Trying' rein it back in. An admirable album then, but one that works best when the songs are dialled down a touch.

GLENN KIMPTON

TRACK TO TRY *Do You Keep It Underneath*

Martyn Joseph
This is What I Want to Say

Pipe Records

★★★★☆

Throughout a career spanning 40 years, nearly that many albums and thousands of live performances, the Welsh singer-songwriter with the masterly guitar chops has remained committed to making music that is relevant, challenging and vital to his audience. "Really what I do," he contends "is to try and write songs that might step up and make some sense of a moment in time. A good song makes you feel like you're not alone in the world." Having looked back and taken stock of his own life on his last, lockdown-influenced album *1960*, here he's very much in the shared present. Hopeful songs like 'Grateful' and 'It's a Fine Thing' acknowledge that, for a man sometimes dubbed 'The Welsh Springsteen' and for us all, it ain't no sin to be glad you're alive. Meanwhile, the BBC Radio 2-commissioned 'Albert's Place' chronicles the volunteer work of the Sunderland Community Soup Kitchen, daily serving hundreds of people, down on their luck, with food, clothing and shelter. That's a powerful and provocative scenario but not, Joseph wants us to notice, one that ought to paralyse us with fear.

KEVIN BOURKE

TRACK TO TRY *Albert's Place*

Megan Doherty

London's home of world music

JAZZ CAFE

Aba Shanti-I
Alogte Oho & His Sounds Of Joy
Ana Carla Maza
Bacao Rhythm & Steel Band
Bem Gil & Moreno Veloso
Bien
Eek-A-Mouse
Fruko & The Bonita Band
Idris Ackamoor & The Pyramids
Jards Macalé
Jazz Jamaica
Jembaa Groove
Jota.pê
Kampire
Kyoto Jazz Massive
La Yegros

Full listings at thejazzcafelondon.com

www.oneworldsmusic.com

One World Proudly Presents

SALIF KEITA

ON TOUR 2024/2025

SALIF KEITA TOUR 2024

02.02. Festival sur le Niger, Segou Mali
03.02. Soirée Nouvel an Chinois, Bamako
14.02 Campement Christian Syren Opening
20. 02. TRIBUTE TO PACO DE LUCIA,
Carnegie Hall, New York USA
22.02. Town Hall Theater New York USA
01.03. Bama Art, Bamako Mali
25. 03. SONGLINES 25th ANNIVERSARY,
Barbican Center London UK
06. 04. Kriol Jazz Festival, Cape Verde
12.04. Budapest Ritmo Festival, Hungary
01. 06. Festival Christian Syren, Djoliba, Mali
22. 06. Union Scene, Dramen, Norway
02. 07. Valencia, Spain
04. 07. Barcelona, Spain
05. 07. Dragignan, France
06. 07. Noches del Botanico, Madrid
07. 07. Afrika Festival Hertme, The Netherlands
29.07. - 09.08. USA & CANADA TOUR
11. 11. Leverkusener Jazztage, Germany

© Photo Anna Šolcová / One World Records & PJ Music 2023

.one world

www.oneworldsmusic.com

ONE WORLD RECORDS
TOP 20 BEST LABELS OF 2023
LATIN GRAMMY WINNER 2023
GRAMMY NOMINATED 2024

TOP OF THE WORLD

BUY NOW

Spell Songs
Gifts of Light

Hudson Records

★★★★★

Spell Songs is a triumphant collaboration, in which seven great musicians are inspired by the books of Robert Macfarlane and the illustrator Jackie Morris to celebrate the magic and importance of nature. Two studio albums, *Spell Songs* (2019) and *Spell Songs II: Let in the Light* (2021), are now followed by this glorious and emotional live album, partly recorded in Hintze Hall at London's Natural History Museum, during a tour in which Morris appeared alongside the band, illustrating the music with live art work.

The remarkable cast is dominated by Scottish folk celebrities, from Karine Polwart and Julie Fowlis to Kris Drever and harpist Rachel Newton, and they are joined by that fine cellist Beth Porter, keys and percussion exponent Jim Molyneux and that ever-adventurous master of the *kora*, Seckou Keita, for a poignant and emotional set that matches powerful solo vocals against fine harmonies and ensemble playing. The highlights include Fowlis' vocals on the gentle 'Bird of the Blizzard', Polwart's pained 'Heartwood', Seckou's joyous and jaunty kora work on 'Heron', and the instrumental 'Otter' (performed while Morris paints otters). And from Porter's 'Charm On, Goldfinch' ('*heaven help us when all your gold is gone*') to Drever's tribute to foxes, 'Red is Your Art', there are constant reminders of the magic of nature and the threats that it faces.

ROBIN DENSELOW

TRACK TO TRY *Heron*

Daudi Matsiko
The King of Misery

Daudi Matsiko

★★★★½

Daudi Matsiko, a British-Ugandan singer-songwriter, delivers a debut album from a vulnerable chapter in his life, that expands what is already a catalogue of transparent and raw storytelling. Full of beautifully arranged strings, horns and wind instruments, the album is subtle and potent. On the title-track, which tackles mental health and his associated bipolar disorder, Matsiko sings '*If I have to wear you on my sleeve again, I'll get undressed.*' It's an album best summarised as a personal de-robing from the cloak of melancholy. The track 'I am Grateful for My Friends' is the quiet and subtle folk banger we didn't know we needed. With Matsiko's refined and artful songwriting sensibilities, along with a mastery of space and time interweaved with simple yet complex guitar and melodic lines, *The King of Misery* is a sonic masterclass in unfiltered humanity.

MARIE BASHIRU

TRACK TO TRY *Derby's Dose*

Lucidvox
All That Remained

Glitterbeat Records

★★★★½

If there was any naiveté on show in Lucidvox's last album, *We Are,* it has surely been worn away by now. Finding themselves in self-imposed exile from Putin's Russia the four female Muscovites of this hard-rocking outfit have delivered a second album that really demands our attention.

Gone is much of the previous bombast, replaced by a sense of melancholy that perhaps only separation, or grief, can bring. The grand scale of the dream-pop-meets-math-rock sound remains, most clearly on show on the album's opener 'There Ahead', so too does the hard-to-follow but impossible-to-ignore jazz drumming of Nadya Samodurova which helps to cement the unsettling atmosphere of the record. The addition of a guesting trumpet, courtesy of Timur Mizinov from scene contemporaries Wooden Whales, adds a new dimension to the sound, emphasising the way that pathos finds a way to punch a hole through the apparent solidity of Galla Gintovt's ubiquitous cascading guitar.

The move away from insistent sonic overwhelm to a more textured piece of work only seems to strengthen the power of the work. New levels of intrigue cut through, while classic motifs remain. Romantic, ethereal, unsettling… impossible to ignore.

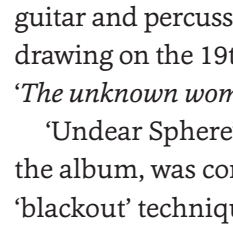
SIMON CROSS

TRACK TO TRY *Naidiya*

Marry Waterson & Adrian Crowley
Cuckoo Storm

One Little Independent

★★★½☆



Marry Waterson has delivered an eclectic array of duet recordings over the past decade or so, from 2011's *The Days That Shaped Me* with her brother Oliver Knight, through to *A Window to Other Ways* with Australian singer Emily Barker. The daughter of Lal Waterson, she made her recording debut on Lal & Norma Waterson's *A True Hearted Girl* in 1977. With her mother she shares an idiosyncratic sense of poetry and song, and her voice contains a good deal of Waterson DNA. Pairing with Ireland's Adrian Crowley, whose voice and music recall the sonorities of Scott Walker or Nick Cave, *Cuckoo Storm* spans a range of musical zones, from the playful and idiosyncratic 'Undear Sphere' to the depths of Crowley's 'Heavy Wings' sung plaintively by Waterson to a spare guitar and percussion backing, its lyrics drawing on the 19th-century story of '*The unknown woman of the River Seine*.'

'Undear Sphere', which opens the album, was composed using her 'blackout' technique, whereby she blacks out lyrics so that only certain words or phrases remain, to spur in-the-moment creation of new work. Their duets are often spoken word threaded into song, as on the lyrically freeform 'Lucky Duck for Grown Ups'. Produced by Portishead's Jim Barr, it's peculiarly haunting.

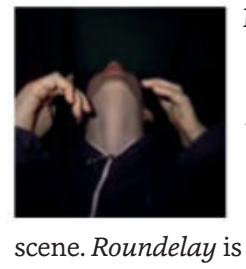
TIM CUMMING

TRACK TO TRY *Heavy Wings*

Otvaal
Roundelay

Random Drama

★★★½☆



Moscow-born duo Otvaal (aka Dmitry Gudnichev and Vlad Stepanov) are a curious addition to the global music scene. *Roundelay* is Gudnichev and Stepanov's debut full-length, but the pair have been putting out music ▸

Elly Lucas

under the Otvaal moniker since 2018. Their name is derived from Russian internet slang, a by-word for crazy, in a good way, but translates literally as 'the head falling off' – and within 40 seconds of starting the record you'll see just how apt a handle it is.

The duo blows through a huge variety of genres, mixing elements of ambient, electronica, indie, hip-hop and some undeniable pop chops, producing a sound reminiscent of late-noughties bloghouse sung entirely in Russian. The title-track captures the fitfulness and fungibility of the record, blurring from flickering bleeps to deadpan vocals and atmospheric loops, calling to mind the indie-electro experiments of outfits such as Son Lux or Apparat. Post-rave popstar Dasha Ushko appears on 'Easy Listening', crooning to an imaginary crowd over a spasmodic backing track. 'Obliquely' closes out the set with the heartfelt vocals of Savva Rozanov, aka Synecdoche Montauk, broken up with itchy breakbeats and euphoric instrumentals. It's a fun, frenzied and cleverly rendered debut.

OLIVIA CHEVES

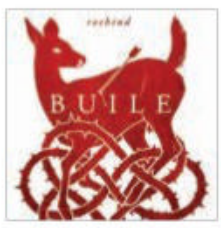
TRACK TO TRY *Obliquely (feat Synecdoche Montauk)*

Ellie Wilson

Roehind
Buile

Alys Hoy

★★☆☆☆



The brainchild of LA-based indie artist Alys Hoy (aka Roehind), *Buile* fuses Celtic traditional songs from across Europe with downtempo electronics. Burnt out from a career as a graphic artist and illustrator, Hoy found new avenues for creative expression by teaching herself music production during the pandemic. That Hoy is self-taught is in itself deeply impressive. More impressive still, is that she sings in the language of the music she covers, her clear, clean vocals wrapping themselves around Irish, Scottish, Welsh and French. 'Cumha Sheathain' brings reverb-laced vocals and syncopated beats to a 14th-century lament for a dead prince, while 'Abu Chuibhl" adds the shimmer of synths to a traditional Lewis spinning song.

Hoy's music is precise, professional and technically impressive. There are moments of real beauty, such as the chamber-pop inflected 'Amhrán Na Farraige' and acoustic closing track 'Tiocfaidh An Samhradh'. However, the high sheen of Hoy's production and delivery has the effect of smoothing out the nuance of these styles and the record as a whole comes out sounding somewhat underwhelming and homogenised.

OLIVIA CHEVES

TRACK TO TRY *Amhrán Na Farraige*

Show of Hands
Roots 2

Hands on Music

★★★★☆

The sense of community created by Devon folk duo Show of Hands is perhaps their greatest achievement. It begins on stage, where Steve Knightley (guitar, mandocello, *cuatro*, etc) and Phil Beer (almost anything, but first and foremost the fiddle) have been joined by Miranda Sykes (double bass), Cormac Byrne (percussion) and a host of collaborators from Seth Lakeman to Phillip Henry & Hannah Martin, Johnny Kalsi and Shahid Khan. *Roots 2* is, as the title suggests, the follow-up to their first round-up, *Roots*. It brings their decades-long story up-to-date with tracks from four albums – *Arrogance, Ignorance and Greed*, *Wake the Union*, *Long Way Home* (including a wonderful spoken Saxon cameo from my favourite historian, Michael Wood) and *Battlefield Dancefloor*. There's also room enough for a couple of live classics – in particular, a reworking of their anthem 'Country Life'.

Those who've seen many a live show may remember Knightley's preamble to their cover of 'The Boys of Summer', where he talks about the feeling of Exmouth as the low season begins, when the crowds have all gone home and the music stops. As Show of Hands hang up their touring boots, with *Roots 2* complementing the final tour, we can surely say our love for you will still be strong...

NATHANIEL HANDY

TRACK TO TRY *Country Life*

Jozef Van Wissem
The Night Dwells in the Day

Incunabulum Records

★★★☆☆

Josef Van Wissem is on a mission, to transform the image of that ancient instrument, the lute, and "to update it and also make it sexy again." Born in Holland, he studied in the US, and after mastering classical renaissance and baroque styles he began to branch out, matching the lute against drones and electronica to create a brooding, atmospheric style that is ideally suited to film music. Van Wissem met and played with the filmmaker and guitarist Jim Jarmusch in New York, a collaboration that led to Van Wissem's celebrated soundtrack for *Only Lovers Left Alive* in 2013. The new album continues his experiments in matching the ancient and modern. Many of the tracks are instrumental, and start with simple, repeated lute themes or riffs that build in intensity, with minimalist melodies, percussion and electronica added in. On the bleakly atmospheric 'The Call of the Deathbird', Van Wissem adds vocals, and is joined by the voice of Hilary Woods, while the finale, 'The Day of the Lord', is even more gloomy. Based on an ancient hymn, it matches throbbing electronica against a jaunty lute theme and the half-spoken lyrics, warning of darkness and death, and that '*the sun is sinking fast, the daylight dies.*'

ROBIN DENSELOW

TRACK TO TRY *The Call of the Deathbird (feat Hilary Woods)*

Monika Wierzbicka
Dusa

Garaż Artystyczny

★★★☆☆

Monika Wierzbicka is no newcomer to the Polish music scene. Active since the early 2000s, she co-founded a pop band Ha-Dwa-O, spent several years singing in folk metal Żywiołak

Michelle Foulser

and released several albums as Nina Nu. She has traversing genres in her blood and for the last few years she concentrated on preserving traditions of Masuria, her native region. *Dusa* (Soul) is a direct follow-up to her last album as Nina Nu, *Głos Dawnych Mazurów* (The Voice of Old Masuria), where she sang 19th-century poetry. Inspired by archival recordings of local folk songs in the almost extinct local Masurian dialect, she decided to write her own songs. Wierzbicka fuses archaic dialect (all lyrics were translated to Masurian by Piotr Szatkowski) with modern, electronic, slightly jazzy music produced by Rafał Benedek. It owes much to Grzegorz Ciechowski's classic *ojDADAna,* albeit more coherent and focused.

The best moments come when clarinets and saxophones (played by Wiesław Wysocki) take over song narrative as is the case of somber 'Psies' or melancholic 'Litanija'. The standout track is 'Mónz', the jazziest of them all. To sum up, *Dusa* is a successful homage to, and nice modernization of, Masurian folklore .

MICHAŁ WIECZOREK

TRACK TO TRY *Mónz*

Ellie Wilson
Memory Islands

Bigo and Twigetti

★★★★½

Nicky Murray

Ellie Wilson is an explorer of the contemporary classical, folk and electronica worlds, and her new album, *Memory Islands,* documents memories and journeys through immersive, reflective and occasionally playful soundscapes. It highlights her experimental ambition and positions her as a violinist comfortable in discovering new and alternative paths in her music.

The album opens with an eerie call, with the violin requesting a moment of reflection in 'Unnamed Unseen'. 'Delta' offers a mesmerising and trance-induced invitation. In 'By the Time I Got Back Pt1', Wilson's grandfather offers naval memories that drift in and out among a medley of violin lilts.

The album continues with the more electronic dance-based contemplation of 'Mindpop' and then with the lengthy beckoning of the violin in 'Halyard'. 'Will I Dream' provides darker overtones before the album concludes with a re-imagined 'Pt 2' of 'By the Time I Got Back'. The former member of Stick in the Wheel is very much exploring new directions that offer both depth and light, melodic folk lines blended with contemporary overtones, drones and occasional glitches and twitches. The album offers lingering traces of the past and the sense and spirit of place with the majority of sounds being created with the violin, regularly sampled, processed and tinkered with.

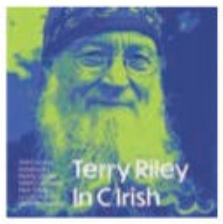
BUZZ BURY

TRACK TO TRY *By the Time I Got Back Pt1*

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Terry Riley in C Irish

Louth Contemporary Music Society

★★★★★



1960s' minimalist guru Terry Riley's quixotic masterpiece 'In C' filtered through the prism of Irish traditional music? On paper it shouldn't work. It really shouldn't work. Anarchic but stringent American avant-garde – fractured into 53 musical phrases lasting from half a beat to 32 beats and entrusted to the improvisatory whims of its performers – is treacherous quicksand compared to the clear liquid streams of Ireland's ancient, melody-laced folk music. But the two blend here with hypnotic, intoxicating immediacy in this thrilling live recording.

Hosted in Dundalk in 2023 by Louth Contemporary Music Society, steadfast champions of making cross-genre, trans-global connections and Ireland's best-kept musical secret, it's a wondrous exercise in musical miscegenation. Riley is blessed by a crack Irish ensemble: fiddlers Zoë Conway and Paddy Glackin, accordionist Máirtín O'Connor, Dónal Lunny (*bouzouki*), Mick O'Brien (*uilleann* pipes), siblings Louise and Michelle Mulcahy (flute and Irish harp). All respond to Riley's invitation to invention, gloriously glossing 'In C' with traditional Irish tropes.

Heard in binaural sound on headphones, it is as trippy and mesmeric as Riley intended, approving audience responses inking in the sense of occasion. A brace of encores, the jig 'The Golden Ring' and reel 'The Old Bush', are delectable cherries on a rich, rewarding cake.

MICHAEL QUINN

TRACK TO TRY *The Old Bush*

BRITISH & IRISH FOLK *by Billy Rough*

It's a delightful blend of songs, traditional tunes, and new compositions that graced the *Songlines* desk this issue, featuring exciting releases from across the UK and beyond. Here's a quick roundup of some of the highlights.

North of England's **Johnny Campbell** delivers a rousing slab of tradition on ***True North*** (Subversive Folk ****). A haunting, evocative and pure sound permeates the album, featuring fiddle and mandolin, but Campbell's raw solo voice steals the spotlight – especially on tracks like 'The Derby Ram' and the opener 'Bonny at Morn'. Past and present merge in a soundscape that beautifully reverberates through the ages – a confident and glorious celebration of the spirit of the North.

Things take a sweatier turn with Belgium folk firehouses **Brisk** and their toe-tapping ***Boom Boom*** (Brisk ***). The quartet's second album is a riot of traditional dance, blending '*Anglo-Saxon and Breton music.*' Tracks like 'The Last Mile' will get even the most reluctant dancers on the floor, while 'Unwind' provides a moment for reflection. It's an album that will leave a broad smile on your face and an ache in your knees.

A similarly energetic vibe is present in **HEISK**'s ***Headstrong*** (The Bothy Society Label ****). The '*six-woman, Scottish folk band*' is a refreshing and much needed inclusion on the Scots folk scene with a sound that plays with tradition but is gamely fuelled with contemporary energy. Trad instruments coexist with synths, and the single 'Tehi-Tegi' is an empowering frenzy of Manx folk and fiddle. HEISK's aim to provide mentoring opportunities for underrepresented young women and gender minorities in traditional music is essential, and *Headstrong* is also a cracking listen. Looking forward to HEISK headlining some festivals come this summer.

Hot from the Scottish Borders comes **Katie's Music Sessions** with their debut ***Earth Songs and Our Natural World: Autumn / Winter*** (Katie's Music Sessions ***). It's a homegrown, organic, and fun listen – an ideal album to introduce younger listeners to folk. A zesty collection of heartwarming original songs, delivered with flute and fiddle, and an abundance of enthusiasm – a beautiful warmer during the winter season.

County Clare's **Laura Mulcahy** has released a sublime and at times theatrical ***Sub Nubibus Margarita*** (Laura Mulcahy ***). It may take a listen or two to fully appreciate this stylish and occasionally mannered piece of work, but it's well worth taking the time to savour. The spirit of Joni Mitchell is felt on 'Sunken Cemetery 1849', while more traditional echoes are heard on the stunning 'Cúmha í Ndiaidh Aisling Shéanta'.

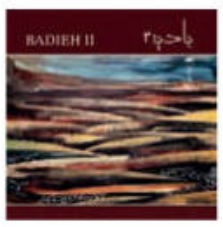
Finally, **Pádraigín Ní Uallachaín**'s ***Seven Daughters of the Sea*** (Irish Song ****) is the Irish singer's tenth studio album and a fetching collection of new compositions. While Irish trad influences remain at the root, it is an album that embraces the very best spirit of folk inclusion with a transcultural presence from the US, India, Australia and Scotland. An inspiring and uplifting listen.

Heisk

Badieh
Badieh II

Worlds within Worlds

★★★★½



Formed around the nucleus of Michel Gasco (*rubab*, *oud*) and Mohammad Miraghazadeh (*tar*, *setar*), Badieh is an exploration of the folksong repertoire of Greater Khorasan, which historically encompasses both sides of the border between Iran and Afghanistan. Following their impressive 2021 debut EP, Gasco and Miraghazadeh have expanded their list of guest musicians to include Persian classical singers Ehsan Nasibi and Golnaz Hariri – who make their presence felt on the soaring opening track 'Yar Golakom'. The percussion section – led by regular collaborator Ramin Ahmadi on *tabla* – is bolstered by Puriya Bahrami on *daf* and Yoohanna Alavi on *zarb*, each skilfully decorating the simple yet intricate rhythm cycles of each piece. 'Asheq Bodom Leili' is another highlight, featuring a stunning guest performance from Jawad Tabesh on vocals and harmonium, as well as added rubab from virtuoso instrumentalist Nasim Khushnawaz. 'Cho Morgh e Shab' closes the album in suitably introspective fashion, with Hadi Sanavi on *ney,* adding a welcome breathy texture to the forefront of the arrangement, and Kian Kordestani on *bendhir*. Masterfully performed and arranged with the care and respect the material deserves, *Badieh II* is a worthy sequel to its predecessor, serving as an essential gateway into a vibrant canon of folksong.

CHARLIE CAWOOD

TRACK TO TRY *Yar Golakom (feat Ehsan Nasibi, Golnaz Hariri, Erfan Homayouni & Puriya Bahrami)*

Badieh

Vitja Pauwels
Early Life Forms

W.E.R.F. Records

★★★★½

This feast for axe freaks captures the live debut of a new supergroup assembled by Brussels-based multi-instrumentalist and sound sculptor Vitja Pauwels during 2022's Brand! festival in Mechelen, Belgium. With special guest, downtown NYC luminary Marc Ribot in tow, the quintet bounce between airy spaghetti-western ambience and deep Afro-Cuban groove, an unusual admixture requiring acclimatisation, but entirely worth the effort. Frederik Leroux's baritone guitar lends its sun-baked prairie-twang to 'Overland', sounding like a lost side from Earth's *Hex; Or Printing in the Infernal Method*, while the sumptuous simmer of 'Release and Return' finds Pauwels and Ribot siphoning rich cascades of chiming harmonics and frothy FX clouds, reminiscent of Bill Frisell's work at its most nebulous, en route to a blistering Pink Floyd-esque finale. Punctuating these meditative tone-poems, the *Early Life Forms* group flex their Latin muscle, with organist Laurens Dierickx vamping wildly to some frisky samba rhythms, before cranking up a snazzy fairground-ride funk. Ribot is clearly having a blast throughout, shifting from spiky-tailed, flanged-out fretboard heroics on 'My Little Renaissance' to cheekily quoting from 'Pop Goes the Weasel' and Bob Marley's 'Get Up, Stand Up' during the band's freewheeling encore, proving again he's just as adept at playing a joker as landing a winning hand.

SPENCER GRADY

TRACK TO TRY *Release and Return*

Ibantuta
The Musical Threads of the Silk Roads

homerecords.be

★★★★½

Hailing from the Basque country and sharing a name with the great 14th-century explorer who travelled from North Africa all over the Middle East and on to China, our modern day Ibantuta is a videographer and fearless traveller who discovered a passion for the *oud* in Bahrain and spent the next five years studying Arabic modal music. He might have subtitled this album 'Have Oud, Will Travel' for it was recorded on a journey eastwards in which he visited 14 countries in 12 months, collaborating with more than 40 musicians along the way and blending the strings of his oud with an astonishingly diverse array of regional instruments. In Kazakhstan he recorded with a bowed *qopyz* player and an accordionist to create a piece titled 'ADAI' which swings wildly between oriental and Celtic modes. On 'Elma' his oud melts seamlessly with Indian *santoor* and with a *sarod* on 'Raag Charukesi'. There are tracks featuring a Chinese *pipa* ('Flowers in Full Bloom') and an Afghani *rubab* ('Parichehr and Parizad') while elsewhere we hear *kemençe*, Azerbaijani *chagane* and Burmese *saung*. Remarkably it all comes together with a perfect coherence so that the 12 pieces sound like a genuine suite rather than a disparate collection of inchoate jams. Magical and touched with a wild sort of genius.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

TRACK TO TRY *ADAI*

Sunny Kim, Vardan Ovsepian & Ben Monder
Liminal Silence

Earshift Music

★★★½☆

Now here's an album that defies easy categorisation, in which Sunny Kim, a Korean-born singer, improviser and composer joins forces with Vardan Ovsepian, an Armenian-born Los Angeles-based jazz pianist, and Ben Monder, an American guitarist, to create an album that veers between ambient sonic landscapes, experimental jazz balladry and improvisation. Sunny Kim studied in the USA, where she began working with Monder, and is currently a lecturer at the University of Melbourne in Australia. Ovsepian has studied in Armenia, Estonia, Finland and the US and held a week-long residency at Melbourne in 2019. All three globetrotters are impressive musicians with jazz roots and a willingness to experiment. Their album is described as '*a sonic reflection on life's silent spaces*,' and it starts with a free improvisation, an eerie, atmospheric wash of sound and wailing vocals interrupted by minimalist piano chords, against which a piano theme eventually emerges. Elsewhere, there are cool, drifting and edgy jazz ballads and bursts of fine jazz piano and guitar work, while on the unsettling 'Poland, 1948', Kim's vocals switch between the gentle and a furious wail. This would make great film music.

ROBIN DENSELOW

TRACK TO TRY *Living Within the Ocean*

Jacob Gurevitsch
El Terreno

Music for Dreams

★★½☆☆

Jacob Gurevitsch makes sure to stress he is not a flamenco musician – in spite of often being presented as one. One does not have to wonder why: even though some sparkles of the Spanish guitar style can be easily spotted in his playing, it is rather obvious that his path keeps flamenco tradition at bay, and he would probably prefer to avoid any misunderstandings regarding the music he pursues. And, surely, *El Terreno* is hardly to be confused with the fiery and virtuosic pieces of Paco de Lucía or Manitas de Plata. Quite the opposite, what we hear in Gurevitsch's playing is a soft, almost ethereal approach to the guitar, with a stronger affinity to smooth or lounge jazz.

After having collaborated with singer Concha Buika on his previous album, Gurevitsch now summons his

fellow Danish singer Annissette to lend her smoky jazz/flamenco vocals to 'Santa Teresa' and Cuban jazz great Arturo Sandoval to embellish 'For Your Love"s waltz with a trumpet flair that adds to the tune's classic Italian soundtrack flavour. Other than that, Gurevitsch takes over with compositions written in the Balearic Islands, though it always sounds over polished, too safe. As if he is creating for the background, careful not to bother anyone. A greater risk would be welcome.

GONÇALO FROTA

TRACK TO TRY *For Your Love (feat Arturo Sandoval)*

Kultur Shock
Acoustic Live

Old Age Recording Co

★★★★½

A mainstay of Seattle's indie scene in the early 2000s, Balkan punk rockers Kultur Shock are back with a surprising new album, *Acoustic Live*. Taken from a live show in their hometown, the album showcases an unplugged sound and a stellar recording quality for what is usually a difficult performance venue (Town Hall Seattle). Comparisons to the other big '*gypsy punk*' (as Kultur Shock describe themselves) band, Gogol Bordello, are inevitable, but, at least on this album, Kultur Shock play circles around them instrumentally. Drawing from Seattle's vibrant Balkan immigrant population, Kultur Shock has always taken the instrumental roots of their Balkan music seriously, bringing in here young Seattle Balkan fiddler/saxophonist Eleni Govetas. Long-time Seattle composer Amy Denio fills out the saxophone with Govetas; Denio has been with the band since 1999. Much of the appeal of Kultur Shock lies in the bravado and wild singing of lead singer and band founder Gino Yevdjevich. A young pop star in the former Yugoslavia, Yevdjevich was stranded in war-torn Sarajevo in the 90s, getting out on an artist visa thanks in part to Joan Baez, whom he'd met in the city. He formed Kultur Shock in the late 90s and it was a multinational political band by Seattle's charged 2000s, still roiling after the city's World Trade Organisation protests of the late 90s. Playing rock clubs, Kultur Shock gravitated towards a harder sound, channelling punk and metal in equal measure. With this new album, they've managed to translate the ferocity of their early music to an acoustic, seated venue, no small feat.

DEVON LÉGER

TRACK TO TRY *Tutti Frutti*

Afarin Mansouri
Dancing with Love

Centrediscs

★★★½☆

Mezzo soprano Afarin Mansouri left Iran for Ontario in 2003 after growing up in the post-revolutionary environment that allowed her to study, but not perform, music. In Canada she was able to pursue her interests in singing and, in particular, opera. 20 years later she has made a name for herself as a singer and composer, with some of her works recorded by the likes of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the Prague Metropolitan Orchestra. This album is a collection of her operatic excerpts and some standalone pieces, all in Farsi.

The instrumentation is largely Western, with appearances from *tar* (skin-covered lute) and '*eastern percussion*.' Piano, clarinet, violin and cello provide much of the harmony with the piano doing a great job of imitating the open sustain of a *santur* (hammered dulcimer). For me, the most compelling tracks are those, such as 'Alchemy', which are more Persian in sound, as without an understanding of Farsi the operatic numbers lack context and are not interesting enough from a Western classical standpoint to compensate. Having said that, the solo flute melody, 'A Lament for Love', which concludes the record, is sublime.

TOM NEWELL

TRACK TO TRY *Alchemy*

Lau Noah
A DOS

Lau Noah

★★★½☆

The joyously uncategorisable Catalan singer, composer and multi-instrumentalist Lau Noah criss-crossed Europe and the US for more than a year to record this collection of original duets in London, Barcelona, Madrid, Los Angeles and, finally, back in her long-time adopted home of New York City, collaborating with the likes of Chris Thile, Jacob Collier, Silvia Pérez Cruz, Jorge Drexler, Shai Maestro, Cecile McLorin Salvant, Gaby Moreno, Salvador Sobral and Angeles Toledano along the way. As can happen with projects like this, ▸

El Gato Negro
Tigre Qui Pleure

X-Ray Production / Que Buen Momento

★★★★½

El Gato Negro is as far from Edgar Allan Poe's creepy Black Cat as you could get. Hiding behind the enigmatic pseudonym is a joyful nomad from Toulouse who left his real name behind in peregrinations through Latin America. Since his return to France, he has integrated the *bolero*, *cha-cha*, *paso*, *cumbia* and *son* sounds into three albums which surround his calm voice. His fourth, *Tigre Qui Pleure,* brings in the new horizons offered by West Africa where El Gato joined album producer Guts early last year (a meeting which also gave birth to Guts' seminal double album *Estrella*, reviewed in *Songlines* #185). In these ten tracks, the *balafon*, *tama*, piercing Wolof vocals and *ngoni* intertwine with the subtle synth, beatmaking, drumming metronomy and soothing poetry composed by the 37 year old, in a happy concoction bound to lift any winter blues. El Gato is joined by a solid backbone of top French musicians (Cyril Atef on drums, iZem the beatmaking scientist, Florian Pellissier on keyboards) and has invited top vocalist Assane Mboup and Cuban piano icon Cucurucho Valdés. But it's El Gato's calm yet voluptuous voice and trenchant texts which bind this kaleidoscope together.

DANIEL BROWN

TRACK TO TRY *Mamie Wata (feat Pat Kalla)*

Elliot Broue

One World Proudly Presents Artists

ON TOUR 24 & 25

.one world

www.oneworldsmusic.com

though, the resulting album, despite some memorable moments such as the opening duet 'Aunque Suene Bonito' with the Guatemalan singer Gaby Moreno and 'Lesser Men Would Call It Love', the single with multiple Grammy Award-winning Punch Brother Chris Thile, feels a little unfocused. But on the closing track 'Ode to Darkness', the sole track credited to Lau alone and apparently recorded live in concert (with a miraculously tuneful audience encouraged to join in the chorus), her widely-admired skill and winning personality really shine.

KEVIN BOURKE

TRACK TO TRY *Ode to Darkness*

Jan Wouter Oostenrijk
Traveling East

Mountain Records

★★★★½

What makes Dutch guitarist Jan Wouter Oostenrijk's latest and sixth solo album, *Traveling East*, stand out is its fascinating fusion of North African, Arabic and blues music, masterfully blended into what seems like an obvious marriage of sound, albeit highly unusual. Essentially an acoustic guitar album sprinkled with subtle rhythms produced by Jordanian percussionist Nasser Salameh, *Traveling East* is remarkably dynamic in tempo and character. Oostenrijk uniquely '*plays quarter-tone guitar with a customised fretboard*' to create the album's traditional Arabic flavours, taking the listener on a wild journey with eight innovative tracks that range from upbeat to melancholy. Highlights include Oostenrijk's momentous *taqsim* performance in 'Taqsim in Maqam Bayat', the seductive Sahara desert blues of 'Carry On' and the ominous tone and steady offbeat of 'Displaced'. The album concludes with a delightful and upbeat rendition of Lebanese singer Fairuz' famous song 'Nassem Elena el Hawa'. Oostenrijk said that making the album gave him *tarab*, an Arab expression that '*describes how you let go of your own world of thoughts and [get] carried away by the music in feelings such as joy, sadness, wonder, trance and ecstasy*.' *Traveling East* successfully gives tarab to its happy listeners too.

FRANKI CLEMENS

TRACK TO TRY *Nassem Elena el Hawa*

Jonas Loelmann

YĪN YĪN
Mount Matsu

Glitterbeat Records

★★★★½

Dutch group YĪN YĪN's third album is a joyous concoction of surf guitar, retro synth and East Asian influence. The record recalls the instrumental 'library music' created for background use by the likes of Alan Hawkshaw, but subsequently rediscovered by dance DJs and hip-hop producers. *Mount Matsu* might be mistaken for a long-lost session by impeccable Japanese studio musicians, but its cheekiness gives it away.

The zany drum battle of 'Tokyo Disko' and the ASMR vocals of 'Komori Uta' exemplify YĪN YĪN's sonic sense of humour. But the foundation of the group's sound is the interlocking of guitar, bass and percussion that supplies such sinuous grooves. The funk and the fun come together riotously on *Mount Matsu*'s 'Takahashi Timing', which begins as an Afrobeat-inflected disco before departing on an audacious synthesiser- and bongo-powered odyssey.

There is simply too much fun to be had with this album to worry about how four men from Maastricht came to draw so heavily on Japanese culture. YĪN YĪN's originality of vision and sonic craftsmanship is compelling, and would surely be even more irresistible if experienced live.

LIAM IZOD

TRACK TO TRY *Takahashi Timing*

Fabrizio Paterlini
Riverscape

Memory Recordings

★☆☆☆☆

This new album from Italian pianist Paterlini is true to form in following the ambient pattern that has seen him clock up a huge number of listeners online. His music has been described as '*cinematic*' and it is true that quite a bit of the album is more like a soundtrack than anything else. Quite what he is bringing new to an already overcrowded field is unclear, and the rather unfocused ambient noodling draws a somewhat unfavourable comparison with another pianist, Yann Tiersen, best-known for his soundtrack to *Amélie*. The album is centred around impressionistic depictions of a river, moving off at times into new-agey mindfulness (for example on 'Be in the Moment'), most of it characterised by inoffensive electronic backgrounds against which the piano provides minimalist patterns or ambient splashes of colour. It is all a bit thin, but might work quite well as a background to a Pilates class.

MARIA LORD

TRACK TO TRY *Morning Walk*

PoiL Ueda
Yoshitsune

Dur et Doux

★★★★½

Yoshitsune is a concept album that hits like a comic book punch. The psychedelic hard-rock of French group PoiL proves an apt medium for a story inspired by the *Heike Monogatari*, a traditional epic describing a 12th-century clan conflict. The source material derives from an oral tradition of itinerant musical monks. In their place we have Junko Ueda, whose gripping vocals are enhanced by the muscular twang of her *biwa* (Japanese lute).

The action bursts from the record through distorted riffs and percussive clatter. In-your-face opener 'Kumo' conveys a stormy struggle between our hero Yoshitsune and hostile ghosts. The anime freneticism is broken by bleaker moments, such as the stirring 'Solo'.

The frequent lurches in tempo and feel that support the storytelling must be the product of careful arrangement. Closer 'Kokô' exemplifies the precise chaos. Ueda's vocals rise and swoop like a hawk above baroque guitar runs and keyboard patterns recalling Mike Oldfield's sinister best.

Yoshitsune invites an illustrated or animated companion piece, but it does not need visual stimulus to leave a searing impression. Dare you run the aural gauntlet?

LIAM IZOD

TRACK TO TRY *Kokô*

Dijf Sanders
Supra

Unday Records

★★★☆☆

Globetrotting sound artist Dijf Sanders' latest sonic trip was to Georgia in the South Caucasus in 2022. Previous field recording trips to Indonesia and Nepal led to the albums *Java* (2017) and *Puja* (2020). The album title literally translates as 'tablecloth' in Georgian and is synonymous with large communal feasts. With the assistance of Georgian traditional musicians, the Amer-Imeri Ethnic Ensemble, Sanders delves into polyphonic Georgian choral music. It works particularly well on the album's standout track, 'Water of Chailuri', which highlights ethereal singing, ▸

accompanied by the sad sound of the bowed *chuniri*, Sanders' recurring melody and waves of synths. 'Night in Panther Skin' features the *saz* (long-necked lute) player Nargile Mehtieva, Georgian chants and what sound like '*spaced-out*' bird calls. Sanders also adds found sounds from his travels to the fabric of his dense recordings. Although the overall tone of the album is melancholic, there are dancefloor moments and sweeping synths that give some tracks a prog rock feel. Considering the musical travelogues he has released so far, *Supra* is his most assured to date.

JOHN CLEWLEY

TRACK TO TRY *Water of Chailuri*

Cory Seznec
Deep of Time

Captain Pouch Records

★★★☆☆

Cory Seznec's fourth album, *Deep of Time*, conceived and produced during the COVID-19 lockdown, presents a contemplative, metaphysical, ethereal side of the guitarist-singer-songwriter's purview. Two different takes on the title-track open and close the 13-track album, both featuring Seznec's spry flatpicking in support of a lilting melody and softly reverbed vocals. Most of the material is contoured by the Franco-American's fondness for melodies, rhythms and grooves derived from extensive travels in Africa. 'Trailblazer' fuses Songhai and Euro-American folk elements. In 'Comparaison du Poisson', a *kalimba*-like pizzicato cello opening leads to a *chimurenga*-esque sonic adventure. Rock, hip-hop and East African styles mesh in 'Two Minds Meet'. A somewhat obscure uptempo Kenyan guitar style from the 1950s known as *omutibo* marks 'Plouk Mama', a song about a fraught love affair, exuberantly rendered in French by Seznec. Co-produced with Jean-Etienne Loose and Geoffroy Dauptain of Tonehouse Studio, the music is elegantly crafted to bring out the best in Seznec and his accompanists: David Chalumeau (harmonica), Raphaël Chassin (drummer), Paolo Conti (pedal steel), Thomas Garoche (bass), Jean-Max Méry (organ), Daniel Mizrahi (guitar), Renaud Ollivier (percussion), Rafgee (sousaphone/trumpet) and Duncan Wickel (fiddle, cello).

DOUG DELOACH

TRACK TO TRY *Comparaison du Poisson*

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Measure, Pour & Mixtape: Music for Cooking

Spinster Records

★★☆☆☆

This is literally a cassette mixtape, limited to 300 copies, although also available digitally. The mechanics of cooking, the sociability of eating, the sonics of preparation, the politics of the kitchen. These are elements that appear among this smorgasbord of artistic approaches. Most selections are either folk or folksy, but there's also a peppering of electronic works.

The concept is appetising, but many of the contributions don't stand out, the cream of the crop oddly being the more direct and literal folksome interpretations, such as Michael Hurley singing '*cook the fish, bake the pie*' repeatedly on 'Clatskanie', or the Magic Tuber Stringband on 'Bill Henseley's Hoppin' John', going for full kitchen hoedown clod-dance, with fiddles, banjo and the close-miked sound of mastication.

Most tracks feature small groups, with minimal equipment, and could easily have been recorded around an intimate kitchen table. Andy McLeod & Sarah Bachman tackle the romantic souring of communal eating invitations, with fragile vocals, guitar and fiddle ('Whistlin' Down the Rows'). Sally Anne Morgan (who founded Spinster Records with Emily Hilliard) uses the sound of grain itself, along with fiddle, guitar and small chimes, with vocals of melancholia in 'Grain Song'. Then Nashville's Ziona Riley winds the spools tight with 'Folly of Tomato', which constitutes *Measure, Pour & Mixtape*'s most unusual song, appearing from slanted angles, and holding great depth in its mysterious words.

MARTIN LONGLEY

TRACK TO TRY *Clatskanie* by Michael Hurley

REGGAE, DUB & DANCEHALL *by Celeste Cantor-Stephens*

This round-up begins with familiar sounds in fresh form, via reinterpretations of some of **Bob Marley & The Wailers**' most popular songs. True to its name, ***Africa Unite*** (Island Records ***) emphasises contemporary African sounds, featuring tracks from artists including Ghana's Sarkodie and Nigeria's Tiwa Savage. Songs lean into poppy Afrobeats, dancehall, glimmers of highlife, contemporary R&B and hip-hop, while Marley's unmistakable voice slides in and out. This may not be one for rootsy Wailers purists, but it is a celebration of modern African pop, of Marley's continuing influence, and of songs that resonate across generations and genres.

Inhabiting a different sonic world, ***An Honest Meal*** (Equiknoxx Music ****) sees Jamaican producer Gavsborg turn vocalist with his first full-length release as **unkle G**. Embracing minimalist sensibilities, the album moves between lush, textural, synth-fuelled backdrops, and junglist-influenced beats, with a nod to lo-fi hip-hop production, and hints of sweet-natured dancehall. Hypnotic riffs and vocal lines glide alongside gradually-unfolding beats that would fit into the early hours of a club chill-out room. Meanwhile, poetic and more-prosaic lyrics sketch scenes from the music studio and life more generally. Whether depicting time with friends, having work rejected, or being stopped by police, these tracks are poignant and often funny, balancing darkness with the sweet and humorous.

On ***Prince Fatty Meets the Gorgon in Dub*** (Gorgon Records *****), London-based **Prince Fatty** (Mike Pelanconi) returns to the deep sounds of 70s-style dub, with new versions of roots reggae tracks from the Bunny 'Striker' Lee catalogue. The album includes some familiar voices from the original tracks, including vocals from Horace Andy, and Tommy McCook's saxophone. Mixed in real time and recorded reel-to-reel, these tracks were created following the analogue traditions of Bunny Lee and fellow dub pioneer King Tubby. Through the depths of bass, drum, horns and springy reverb, Fatty brings a contemporary cleanliness to his production. The result is crisp and tasteful: a classic dub for the digital age.

If You Ask Me To: Victor Axelrod Productions for Daptone Records (Daptone Records *****) celebrates the work of American musician, producer and audio engineer Victor Axelrod, and his long-running work with the Daptone label. A collection of singles released between 2007 and 2023, the record also includes new tracks from Binky Griptite and Sugar Minott. Though dominated by New York-based musicians, including Sharon Jones and Bob & Gene, the compilation channels the sounds of 60s Jamaica. A soulful, sweetly harmonised rocksteady drives this release, accompanied by closely-related sounds of early 60s American R&B, and enveloped by the familiar Daptone vintage aesthetic.

This round-up ends in Australia, with Melbourne-based **KONG**'s debut dub LP, ***The Yellow King's Revenge*** (Holiday Maker Records ***). Self-consciously looking to 70s and 80s dub production, this album is warm, saturated and delightfully hazy. A gentle, poppy eccentricity emerges via surprising melodic riffs and rhythmic turns, adding an air of lighthearted humour. Inspired by walks along a suburban creek, the record is an apt reflection of converging styles and times, of earthy roots littered with man-made concrete, and the unlikely folkloric figure who treads both worlds and might bring instrumental dub to new spaces and ears.

Moïse Youmba

jason carter
seeking the divine

"He expresses his emotions and spiritual connection with the nature of the planet in his compositions, which are close to ambient, very warm in mood and unusual in sound."
– Jazz quad, Russia

OUT NOW!

"Jason Carter builds extraordinary bridges between cultures...
– Sir Sherard Cowper Coles, former British Ambassador to Afghanistan, Israel and Saudi Arabia

NAXOS WORLD

www.arcmusic.co.uk

ESTABLISHED 1986
birnam

CD & VINYL PRESSING
With a full range of packaging options.

MUSIC PROMOTION
Be seen. Be heard. Get the word out where it matters.

GRAPHIC DESIGN
Eye-catching design for every part of your project.

DIGITAL DISTRIBUTION
Streaming, downloads, online CD sales, and more.

THE COMPLETE SERVICE FOR INDEPENDENT MUSICIANS.
MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR MUSIC.

birnamcd.com • info@birnamcd.com
+44 (0) 1350 727158

munster-records.com

VAMPI SOUL

Distributed by SHELLSHOCK

GHETTO BROTHERS
"Power-Fuerza" LP
Produced by boogaloo don Bobby Marin, this masterpiece is a sonic testament to the Ghetto Brothers' fusion of resilience, cultural richness, and musical innovation. Each track is a vibrant tapestry, weaving together the raw energy of the South Bronx streets and the soulful melodies born from the trio's Puerto Rican heritage. We are so happy to make this obscure Latin funk gem available again!

CUARTETO YEMAYÁ
"El Tic Tac" LP
This is the quartet's second LP, recorded in 1971, and contains mostly Peruvian songs with a strong Cuban flavor where Pancho Acosta's electric guitar reaches vertiginous heights and is combined with outstanding conga and timbales playing. Extremely rare and hard to find in its original issue, this is the first-time reissue. Remastered from the original tapes.

OTHER VAMPISOUL NEW RELEASES:
Príncipe y su Sexteto "Salsa de Guaguancó", Marie Queenie Lyons "Soul Fever"

LISTEN NOW!

On this second label workshow from the labels Nordic Notes, CPL-Music and Beste! Unterhaltung gets one song from each of the last 20 releases from the years 2022/2023.

Rüüt *Kadrile* / **Vimma** *Maailmanloppu* / **Okra Playground** *Veri* / **Jenni Venäläinen** *Pyy* / **Merema** *Vay tyadyanay – avanyay* / **Baklava** *Kej* / **Lakvar** *Ki-Be (Ki nyirësbem be nyirësbe)* / **Alice in WonderBand** *Jovano, Jovanke* / **Anna Murtola** *Northwind Bulería* / **Emmi Kuittinen** *Surun synty* / **FRÄNDER** *Evigt regn* / **ENKEL** *Kipiä polska* / **Uusikuu** *Suklaasydän* / **Johanna Juhola** *A Brighter Future* / **Shono** *Buyan* / **Sähköpaimen** *Yötulet* / **Gankino Circus feat. Uusikuu** *Ievan polkka* / **Lena Jonsson Trio** *Nordanvinden* / **Umala Tevi** *Migla* / **Emilia Lajunen** *Viitasaarelta*

All albums of the songs on this compilation are available in well-stocked local record stores or **www.cpl-musicshop.de**

CPL MUSIC
BESTE! UNTERHALTUNG
NORDIC NOTES

Asia REVIEWS

Dasom Baek
Mirror City

Métron Records

★★★★★

Two instruments evoke Korea like no others: the *daegeum* bamboo flute (and its smaller equivalent, the *sogeum*) and the *ajaeng* long zither. Both play beautiful, lyrical melodies, but a *mirliton* on the daegeum makes it breathe, buzz and fizz, adding a unique and appealing quality. And in ancient times, when the ajaeng was bowed (rather than plucked) it was said to literally creak. Both instruments historically trace back almost 1500 years, but while they stand witness to a massive depth of tradition, here they meet contemporary electronica, ghostly whispers, multi-tracking, and a use of reverb that seems to nod to the days of analogue tape. This is Dasom Baek's second solo album. It is personal, but it also evokes a contemporary zeitgeist as Baek holds a mirror up to herself and to the millions living amid the bustle of modernity, longing for a return to a more spiritual existence. This is a theme dear to many Koreans; it was even tackled in early K-pop by the legendary Shin Hae Chul and his group NEXT. Baek has appeared with international orchestras and at festivals such as SXSW, while back in Korea she is currently working on a PhD at the top university, Seoul National (where the first Korean electronic music was made many years ago). Tracks build from minimalist vamps that layer over each other before receding into the ambient background texture to allow sweeping daegeum melodies to emerge. Melodic flurries take us into the clouds, vocal interjections suggest the unease of city life, and singing bells and bell trees evoke temples in distant mountains.

KEITH HOWARD

TRACK TO TRY *Tightrope*

Zia Mohiuddin Dagar
Vrindavan – 1982

Black Truffle

★★★★★

Presented as a double LP and in digital form this is an outstanding, although previously unheard, recording of the *rudra veena*, a relatively rare instrument played by one of its principal masters, Zia Mohiuddin Dagar of the famous Dagar family. He is performing at a *dhrupad* (pure classical vocal style) festival held in the North Indian city of Vrindavan in 1982 and although dhrupad is primarily a vocal genre, renowned for its purity and devoid of all ornamentation, the rudra veena, a huge low-pitched version of *veena* with large gourds at both ends, plays a vital role in the training of singers by replicating and exploring some of the unique and elusive microtonal nuances associated with this genre. Although steadily declining in popularity from about the 1800s, dhrupad enjoyed a revival towards the middle of the 20th century owing largely to the Dagar dynasty of which Zia Mohiuddin is a 19th-generation descendant. On this recording he performs the night *raga* 'Yaman Kalyan' with a leisurely *alap* (introductory slow tempo) where the raga is unfolded for us, note by note, the pitch and tempo gradually rising to be joined by the *pakhavaj* (ancient barrel-shaped drum) until one is convinced that this is the true music of the spheres, elevating heart and soul. A sublime expression that transcends earthly realms.

JAMEELA SIDDIQI

TRACK TO TRY *Yaman Kalyan – Jhala & Chautala (12 Beats)*

Tashi Dorji
Guitar Improvisations & Tashi Dorji

Drag City

★★★☆☆

These two albums were originally issued solely on cassette by Headway Recordings, a now-defunct local label in Asheville, North Carolina, in 2012 and 2013; this reissue marks their debut on vinyl. Renowned for his immediate, experimental and gradually unfolding textural improvisations, the two were among Dorji's first recordings. Born and raised in Bhutan, Dorji moved to the US in 2000, and has released music both solo and collaboratively with multiple US-based musicians. Influenced by the late Derek Bailey and others, *Guitar Improvisations* was the result of his first improvisational session, recorded in a friend's semi-studio basement – "like improvisation walked in and there was a volcanic eruption," says Dorji. The album moves from a repeating idea that gradually evolves to finger plucking extraordinaire. Metrical sections end in sudden stops, harmonics meet glissandi caused by strings retuning, snippets of melodies are counterbalanced by plucking beyond the guitar's bridge, and chordal textures couple to single resonant tones given considerable vibrato. The self-titled second album was recorded when Dorji was visiting student colleagues who had access to studio facilities at a local university. It feels much more prepared, but also more experimental. He admits he had worked out a series of timbral, harmonic and dynamic ideas in advance, but he also rejects comfortable vamps and metric passages. In sum, although the two albums are by a Bhutanese American, they have little to do with Bhutan, but they do neatly cover the cornucopia of experimental jazz improvisation.

KEITH HOWARD

TRACK TO TRY *Improvisation IV (Guitar Improvisations)*

Sarves Thiru
Instant Moksha – Mantras

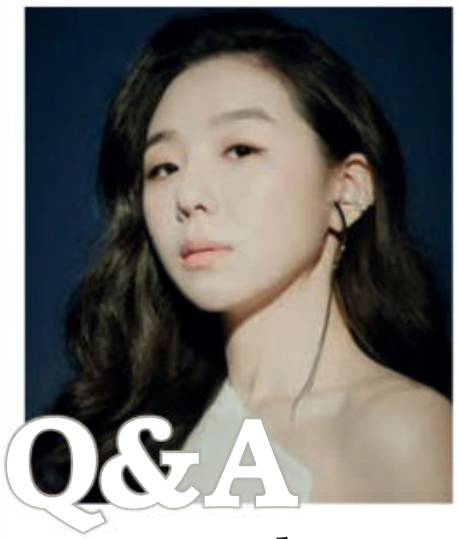
Sarves Thiru

★★☆☆☆

Sarves Thiru is a Malaysian-born singer now based in London. She's studied Carnatic singing and says: "I hope that people can find peace, healing and joy through the music I create." As the title suggests, this really isn't music for listening to, more for meditation. It's pretty repetitive and minimal, although there are some nice *bansuri* flute solos (although no player credited) alongside bland guitar and piano accompaniments and plenty of reverb. Each of the seven tracks is dedicated to a different Hindu deity or prayer. Perhaps best is 'Shiva: Om Tryambakam' with percussion hinting at Shiva's dance. The worst is 'Day and Night: Sri Ram' with lyrics in English and a banal repeated melody reminiscent of those Hare Krishna troupes you sometimes encounter on the street. From time to time there are some nice vocal ornamentations, but mostly it's sickly sweet.

SIMON BROUGHTON

TRACK TO TRY *Shiva: Om Tryambakam*



Q&A

Dasom Baek

How long have you been playing the *daegeum* and *sogeum* for? My first connection to traditional Korean music was when I held my mother's hand and enrolled in a local *danso* class when I was seven years old. Later, I learned daegeum from teacher Lee Seang-gang, who is recognised as a national intangible cultural asset, and went on to attend art high school, university, and I am currently pursuing a doctoral degree, specialising in my instrument.

What do these instruments signify for you? I think the charm of wind instruments is that their sound is based on how you breathe. Depending on the playing technique, you can make a sound like a warm embrace, or like a sharp stab to the heart. Basically, one can breathe life into the instrument and create wonderful sounds.

How did you build this album? Before I make my music, I visualise thoughts through my drawings. Then, by looking at the drawing, I search for the right sounds and begin composing. I breathe a little differently, or maybe try out a new technique. I search for the sounds that best express my story, sometimes pushing at the limits of the instrument. Sometimes I write a melody first and sometimes I make [the] electronic layers first. It depends on what I want and think.

Do you have a favourite track from this album? 'Tightrope'... It's about a lone person balancing dangerously on a high-wire. Is the wire safe? Will they fall? Can they make it to the other side? This song represents the uncertainty of city-living, for those that walk the high wire of urban life wearing an emotional mask on a daily basis.

Eusin Cheon

Common Kings
Celebration

Mensch House Records

★★★☆☆

Like many of their Oceanic compatriots, ever since their 2013 debut California-based quartet Common Kings have managed to craft a distinctly Pacific brand of reggae, which is true to their own diverse backgrounds. With all but one member being first-generation American, the band is made up of a Samoan-born Hawaiian lead guitarist, a Fiji-born bassist, a Hawaii-raised Samoan rhythm guitarist, and an LA-born Tongan drummer.

But their Polynesian roots don't completely mask their obvious affection for both the original Jamaican reggae style and inner-city American hip-hop. 'Do My Thing' combines well-known James Brown and Bob Marley riffs with a bass-heavy rap from Jamaican artist Royal Blu, while other album guests include Jamaican star Kabaka Pyramid & Spanish rapper Spreadlof ('Came Up'), American-Samoan reggae singer J Boog ('Raggamuffin') and Australian-Maori dancehall toaster Sammy J fronting Oahu (Hawaii) band The Green on 'Queen Majesty'.

While the band's 2017 album *Lost in Paradise* was nominated for a Grammy as Best Reggae Album, a couple of these new tracks veer a little too close to mainstream pop for comfort. But 'Celebration (One Shot)' best sums up the group's positive Pacific attitude, and makes this release well worth a listen and a dancing skank.

SETH JORDAN

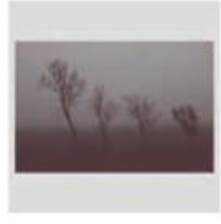
TRACK TO TRY *Celebration (One Shot)*

Maatakitj

Hand to Earth
Mokuy

Room40

★★★★☆



Two years on from their exquisite self-titled 2021 debut album (five stars in #172), the Hand To Earth ensemble – a renamed offshoot of the Melbourne-based Australian Art Orchestra – returns with another chapter of this very creative project.

Led by ex-AAO Musical Director, trumpeter-producer Peter Knight, along with traditional Indigenous Yolngu songman-singer Daniel Wilfred, and his *yidaki* (didgeridoo)-playing brother David Wilfred, the quintet also features experimental South Korean vocalist Sunny Kim and Australian clarinettist-sound artist Aviva Endean.

The group explains that their music '*is not free improvisation but it is not composed either... somewhere in between... it feels like 'weaving'... of our different histories, different lives, and different perspectives together.*'

Utilising Wilfred's ancient *manikay* (public songs) as their basis, and sung in his first language, Wagiläk, the two new long tracks here – 'Watu' and 'Wata Dhärranhaynu' – gently unfold, with layers of voice, instrumentation and production blending organically and quite seamlessly. The title-track is a lovely ambient sound excursion.

Hand to Earth continue to fascinate and successfully combine ancient time-honoured tradition with a thoroughly contemporary aesthetic.

SETH JORDAN

TRACK TO TRY *Watu*

Maatakitj
Maatakitj

Maatakitj

★★★★☆

Following up on his 2022 six-track collaboration *Noongar Wonderland* with Aussie dance music producer Paul Mac (reviewed in #181), Indigenous West Australian academic-singer-songwriter Clint Bracknell – who performs as Maatakitj (meaning 'skinny legs like a spear') – returns with a more stripped-down approach.

Using just voice, electric guitar and percussion, Maatakitj (pronounced 'mart-a-key-tch') revisits his *Noongar Wonderland* tracks here, along with newer material. But this time the electronic dance beats are replaced by an almost-acoustic sensibility, and the songs are stronger for it.

Singing in his Noongar language, these reimagined melodies were redeveloped for *Song Circle* – a week-long large-scale event, as part of Perth's inaugural EverNow Festival.

As a Professor of Music with a PhD in Noongar song, and an initiator of projects improving Indigenous community access to cultural heritage, Maatakitj's singing is, unsurprisingly, pronunciation-perfect. His songs are further enhanced by well-harmonised backing vocals from Noongar wife-actress Kylie Bracknell, and minimalist rhythms contributed by Malaysian-Aussie percussionist Arunachala.

On new tracks like 'Bindara' (Lightning) – commissioned for a Kronos Quartet collab – 'Yongkar' (Kangaroo) and 'Djaat' (Sun), the mood is mostly laid-back, but *Maatakitj* is a solid album, with an Indigenous linguist's eye and ear for detail.

SETH JORDAN

TRACK TO TRY *Bindara*

HAWAIIAN REISSUES *by Seth Jordan*

Michael Green

These two companion compilations of vintage recordings from the mid-20th century feature tracks from a crucial period in the evolution of Hawaiian music. ***Fish & Poi: Hawaiian Independent 78rpm Discs ca. 1945-56*** (Canary Records ***) features releases from a time when the population of the Hawaiian archipelago numbered less than 500,000 people. A third were Japanese, a quarter Caucasian, only a sixth (60,000-100,000) were native Hawaiian, and the remainder mostly Chinese, Korean and Filipino.

Within that multicultural context, while certain traditional local practices such as the hula and Hawaiian language were restricted by American-influenced authorities, the introduction of the European guitar gave rise to the lap steel picking and male falsetto singing that would become recognised around the world.

Representing this new *hapa haole* (half-foreign) Hawaiian sound, early labels like HTP and later Bell Records cranked out homegrown recordings at an astonishing rate.

Drawing performers from the thriving Honolulu hotel and nightclub scene of the 1940s, local artists like Genoa Keawe with Her Hula Maids ('Pili Aloha'), Jacob Keliikoa's Hawaiians ('Ta-Hu-Wa-Hu-Wa-I') and George Kainapau ('Mauna Kea') all feature on *Fish & Poi*. The associated ***Yellow Ginger: Hawaiian Recordings ca. 1948-58*** (Canary Records ***) focuses on the 1948-1958 era recordings of George K Ching's popular 49th State Hawaii label. Artists include John K Almeida & His Hawaiians ('Gorgeous Hula') and George Naope ('Ancient Chants: Pununa Ka Manu; Au 'A Ia'). Together, these compilations contribute valuably to the rediscovered historical legacy of Hawaiian music.

TRACK TO TRY *Gorgeous Hula* by John K Almeida & His Hawaiians

Classical & Jazz REVIEWS

The editors of our sister music magazines, *Gramophone* and *Jazzwise*, recommend some of their favourite new recordings

Classical

Brought to you by GRAMOPHONE

Orchestre National des Pays de la Loire / Pascal Rophé
Michael Jarrell: Orchestral Works
BIS

As on its previous album devoted to Jarrell's music, BIS has paired two of his scintillating concertante works with an orchestral work as centrepiece. *Paysages avec figures absentes – Nachlese IV* (2009) was written as a '*sort of antiphony*' for violin and orchestra created '*differently*,' and there is little of the conventional cut-and-thrust of the standard concerto. Rather, the work has a meditative feel, due perhaps to the music's resolute refusal to develop its material in a traditional manner. Ilya Gringolts is the passionate soloist here, turning these 'gleanings' into something wholesome and substantial.

There is no lack of substance in the percussion concerto *...Un Long Fracas Somptueux de Rapide Céleste...* (1998), which draws inspiration from a surreal description of a World War II Battle on the River Meuse, which gave this tone poem its title, 'a long, sumptuous thunder of celestial rapidity'. Florent Jodelet is the soloist bringing order to the disparate elements and textures – not least the recurring 'primal explosion' with its skittering percussion and rumble of drums. Pays de la Loire Orchestra, who accompany the two concertos, take centre stage in the centrepiece, *Sechs Augenblicke* (2022), Jarrell's response to the incongruity of composing for large ensembles during lockdown. The six moments gradually decrease towards the centre of the set, and while the final pair increase in length, they never match the opening couple. Here Jarrell's orchestral manner achieves its clearest form. Conductor Pascal Rophé secures a strong and evocative account, with gorgeous sound. A very strong recording.

GUY RICKARDS

Resurgam with The English Cornett and Sackbut Ensemble & Mark Duley
Gentleman Extraordinary
Resonus

Described as '*Ireland's premiere project choir*,' Resurgam make their first commercial recording in collaboration with The English Cornett and Sackbut Ensemble: a splendid programme of music by Thomas Weelkes, the 400th anniversary of whose death was marked last year.

Opening with the magnificent 'Alleluia, I heard a voice', Resurgam demonstrate the power and confidence of their ensemble, with bold lower voices and an attractive treble sheen from the sopranos. Their sound has plenty of room in Holy Trinity Church, Minchinhampton (Stroud), and their stately tempos often reflect this.

There are fine soloists in the 'Evening Service for Trebles', especially in the witteringly beautiful passage '*hath holpen his servant Israel*,' and listen in the anthem 'Give the king thy judgments, O God' for the verse beginning '*Behold, O God our defender*.' It's one of the most beautiful moments on the whole of the *Gentleman Extraordinary* project: sheer magic. I'm not quite sure about the trancelike blend on 'Most mighty and all-knowing Lord', though, which sits at odds with the expressive instrumental playing.

Speaking of which, I must give a big shout-out to The English Cornett and Sackbut Ensemble. I've long had a fondness for viol-playing in this repertoire, and the ensemble's sound, coupled with the perky organ-playing of Silas Wollston, is so rich, warm and expressive that they continually drew my attention. All round, this is a very welcome addition to the classical music catalogue.

EDWARD BREEN

Jazz

Brought to you by jazzwise

Cautious Clay
Karpeh
Blue Note

Ohio-born Joshua Karpeh – aka Cautious Clay (yes, it's a play on Muhammad Ali's birth name) – is perhaps something of an unknown quantity in the wider jazz world. But when his second album drops on Blue Note and is packed with heavyweight guests, not least guitar star Julian Lage, you're forced to sit up and listen. Clay is an adept virtuoso across several instruments – his cutting sax and flute feature prominently – and his rich, soulful tenor voice sits somewhere between Gil Scott-Heron's gruff tones and Donny Hathaway's silken refinement. While there's a lineage from the likes of early 2000s duo OutKast to recent crossover titans Kamasi Washington and Thundercat, Clay's hybrid sound is his own and embraces soul-funk anthems such as ear-worm 'Ohio' and unabashed heart-on-the-sleeve balladry on 'Take A Half' and 'Moments Stolen', with wild jazz-heavy twists. The album's most outré track, 'Glass Face', features former John McLaughlin bass guitarist Kai Eckhardt (who happens to be Clay's uncle) whipping up a flamenco-slap storm while Clay harmonises vocals with Grammy-winning Arooj Aftab, silver surfing through a galaxy of key changes. Immanuel Wilkins and Ambrose Akinmusire duel with Clay on the storming instrumental 'Yesterday's Price' – with the leader more than holding his own on tenor. Soulful, heartfelt and life-enhancing, *Karpeh* packs a knockout punch .

MIKE FLYNN

Imogen Ryall
Sings The Charles Mingus / Joni Mitchell Songbook
Rubicon Jazz

'*A door opener for me*' is how vocalist Ryall describes *Mingus*, the collaboration between Joni Mitchell and Charles Mingus released in 1979, months after Mingus' untimely death. One of her most important touchstones, you get the sense that Ryall has completely immersed herself in the *Mingus* sound-world, such that the entire album has been absorbed into her consciousness. Bookended by a 37-second instrumental blast of 'Boogie Stop Shuffle' (from the brilliant *Mingus Ah Um*) and the beautiful tribute to tenor saxist Lester Young, 'Goodbye Pork Pie Hat' – and including all of the other songs from *Mingus* albeit with slightly different interludes – the result is a remarkable paean to one of Mitchell's most singular albums. Together with her band, Ryall delivers captivating versions of the heartrending 'A Chair in the Sky' ('*I'm waiting for the keeper to release me*') and 'The Dry Cleaner from Des Moines', which shines a spotlight on her exceptional time feel. You might have thought it impossible to cover 'The Wolf That Lives in Lindsey', being so heavily coloured by Mitchell's rented Martin D-18 acoustic guitar which '*buzzed like a rattlesnake*' as she recalled in the notes for *Love Has Many Faces*, but this version announces itself as one of the great Mitchell covers. Ryall's smart new lyrics for 'Self-Portrait in Three Colors', similarly excerpted from *Mingus Ah Um*, provide a further unexpected treat.

PETER QUINN

Songlines, Gramophone and Jazzwise are published by MA Music, Leisure & Travel, home to the world's best specialist music magazines. To find out more, visit gramophone.co.uk, jazzwise.com and songlines.co.uk

Photo: Margit Rønning Omholt

HUBRO

OUT NOW!

Liv Andrea Hauge Trio
Ville Blomster
February 2nd
CD, LP, Digital

hubromusic.com

Hackett Foundation presents

WOMADelaide

THE WORLD'S FESTIVAL

"... AUSTRALIA'S MOST DIVERSE AND SURPRISING FESTIVAL" - THE GUARDIAN

8-11 MARCH 2024

BOTANIC PARK / TAINMUNTILLA

ADELAIDE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

JOIN US & CELEBRATE THE WORLD OF MUSIC, ARTS AND DANCE

ADELAIDE SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Government of South Australia
South Australian Tourism Commission

MY WORLD

Mariza

Simon Broughton sits down with the Portuguese *fado* phenomenon to hear about her favourite songs and artists, and the role of music in her upbringing

"Portuguese *fado* singer Mariza has been on the cover of *Songlines* no less than five times – no-one has been on the cover more – so clearly we've heard a lot from her over the years. But aside from her artistic prominence and the quality of her music, the fact that her career mirrors the magazine's lifetime and we've been able to chart her progress pretty much from the beginning makes her someone special for us. "It's true we are walking together with *Songlines*," Mariza says.

Songlines started in 1999, which happens to be the year that Amália Rodrigues, Portugal's biggest fado star, died aged 79. The country declared three days of mourning and Mariza, then making a name for herself in the best fado tavernas of Lisbon, was asked to sing a broadcast tribute in her memory. This led to her first album *Fado em Mim* (Fado in Me), released in 2001. The *Songlines* review in #15 (November/December 2002) was headlined: '*Finally, a fado artist who deserves the title 'the new Amália'.*' There were several songs on the album associated with Amália, plus 'Ó Gente da Minha Terra' for which Amália wrote the words, but never recorded. It is a signature piece for Mariza to this day. "In all my records since the beginning, there has always been at least one song of Amália," she says. "It's like saying thank you to her because she's been the support of all the Portuguese singers having a career outside [the country]. She was the first person who took fado abroad." Last year, Mariza was the first person to perform fado at the BBC Proms.

I saw Mariza for the first time in 2002 when she sang in London's tiny Kemia bar beneath Momo's restaurant, which was for some years an exclusive music venue. It was clear she was a major talent. Her profile in the UK was helped by replacing Björk at the last minute on the TV show *Later... with Jools Holland*, being played frequently by radio DJ Charlie Gillett and winning a Radio 3 Award for World Music in the Europe category, when that BBC station was devoting much more time to the genre. In 2006, after her third album, *Transparente*, I directed a BBC/Portuguese TV co-production called *Mariza and the Story of Fado* which portrayed her personal history along with that of fado, which only began in the 1820s.

Mariza was born in Mozambique to a Portuguese father and Mozambican mother. She came to Lisbon with her parents aged three after the Carnation Revolution in Portugal which led to the independence of the colonies in Africa – Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Saõ Tome and Cape Verde. *Transparente*'s title-track talks of Mariza's Black grandmother knowing she was born to sing, and the Zambezi, the biggest river in Mozambique, flowing into the Tejo – the river in Lisbon, frequently referenced in fado lyrics. She tells me about an aborted project with Ry Cooder that would have seen her go to Mozambique to record with local musicians. "Stewart Sukuma is a Mozambican singer I really like," she says. "My mother knew him since he was a little boy. When I go there and listen to music from Mozambique, I don't know why it isn't better known."

This year is the 50th anniversary of the 1974 Carnation Revolution, celebrated on April 25. This was when, largely because of its unpopular colonial wars, the authoritarian Estado Novo government fell to a military coup that aimed to usher in democracy. It got its name from people welcoming the military onto the streets by placing carnations in the muzzles of their guns. It's frequently called a bloodless revolution, although four people were killed by the Estado Novo's secret police.

"I'm a child of the revolution," says Mariza. "Because if there was not a revolution, I would never have gone to live in Portugal and I wouldn't have been a singer. My parents would be having a very rich life in Africa. I'd be studying in London or South Africa like all my cousins did. The revolution changed my life because my parents were obliged to move to Lisboa."

Her father was the local manager of a Dutch company selling electrical goods in Mozambique. He was arrested and disappeared for two months, imprisoned because he was white. "My mum went everywhere to try and find him. They used to call it '24/20' – you had just 24 hours to get out with 20 kilos. He didn't even have that. When she found him, my mum just put a gold necklace on his chest and my father went to a plane and was deported." She arrived with her mother in Lisbon in January 1976. "I remember my father waiting for us at the airport and he offered me an apple. Every time I see an apple, I have that image in my head." They went to live in a hostel and got milk and food from an organisation helping refugees coming from the colonies. "When people say a young child doesn't understand, it's not true. I was feeling everything. How desperate they were to restart their lives. It's like a movie in my head. A lot of images."

"I used to look through the curtain to see what was happening... I said to my father 'Can I sing *fado* too?'"

After nearly 50 years of an authoritarian dictatorship, Lisbon was very different to the open city it is now, says Mariza. "At that time, Lisboa was not prepared for such a big amount of immigrants. We were refugees. People look at you like you are an outsider and you don't belong. I remember people calling my mum Black. They never think about the good things you can bring to society. They always think you're going to steal their jobs."

Mariza's mother, who was washing clothes to scrape together a living, heard about a gentleman who had a little taverna in Mouraria, one of the traditional fado districts of Lisbon, and wanted someone to take care of it. "So we started again from zero." Mariza's father opened a fado house which is where she first got her taste for the music. "I remember a very small place, dark – because fado singers don't like too much light. I used to look through the curtain and try to look and see what was happening in the taverna. And I said to my father 'Can I sing fado too?'"

Mariza's father wasn't a fan of female singers, so Mariza never heard Amália, but she did hear Carlos do Carmo. And the first fado she sang was one of his. "I always had this feeling one day I was going to meet him and Carlos was a support to me for many years." Both do Carmo and Mariza were instrumental in getting fado on the UNESCO intangible heritage list in 2011.

In 2013 the veteran *fadista* Carlos de Carmo, who died in 2021, recorded the album *Fado é Amor* with singers of the new generation who had grown up after the revolution. With Mariza he sang 'Júlia Florista', about a lady selling flowers in the street. "I still have some memories of this Lisboa of which we sing. This song swings and it's a very up tempo fado," Mariza reflects. ◆

Carlos Ramos, Miguel Santos

Mariza receiving a *Songlines Music Award* for her album *Mariza* in 2019

Justin Adams

The prolific guitarist has worked with everyone from Robert Plant and Souad Massi to Tinariwen and Sinéad O'Connor, and isn't stopping yet. ***Robin Denselow*** unpacks his long and busy career

One of the many highlights of last summer's WOMAD were the four appearances by Justin Adams, that unique guitarist who matches post-punk energy with a love of everything from blues and rock to African and Middle Eastern styles. First, he held a workshop where he explained how these influences were reflected in his distinctive playing. Then he both interviewed and performed with the Moroccan Gnawa master Mohamed Errebbaa. Later came a virtuoso set with Mauro Durante, leader of the Italian *pizzica* exponents CGS (Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino), in which the duo showed why they were the deserved winner of 2023's *Songlines Music Award* in the Fusion category with a rousing set that included a tribute to Sinéad O'Connor, with whom Adams had toured and recorded. Finally, he joined Souad Massi to add furious electric guitar work to her Arabic treatment of 'Hurt', from her latest album *Sequana*, which he produced.

Adams has played with and/or produced a quite astonishing array of great musicians from around the world, and admits "sometimes I look around at the people I'm playing with and I can't believe it." He has recorded solo work but is a serial collaborator, explaining, "it's good for me to work with singers or I'm liable to make atmospheric instrumental music. I sing a little and occasionally write a song – but what I *can* do is write a riff a day! They just come out of me – riffs and grooves and atmospheres... I like drones, grooves... and a little bit of grit. I don't like things too flashy."

He has enjoyed a colourful, lengthy and complex history. Brought up in Jordan and Egypt, where his father was British Ambassador, he listened to the great Lebanese singer Fairuz and first decided he wanted to be in a band "when I was four." Leaving school, he studied History of Art and started playing in bands, mixing punk influences with funk and reggae – and supporting Kid Creole & The Coconuts with The Impossible Dreamers. Travels to Turkey reminded him of the music he had heard growing up, and he was able to experiment in mixing Arabic and African styles against post-punk influences when he joined Jah Wobble's Invaders of the Heart in the late 80s. He stayed for eight years, recording three albums, including *Rising Above Bedlam* which included those remarkable singers Natacha Atlas and Sinéad O'Connor. He went on to tour and record with O'Connor, who also joined him on the "landscapey" Ghostland project.

Meanwhile, he began working as producer for the adventurous French band Lo'Jo, who mixed *chanson*, jazz and African influences. With Lo'Jo he travelled to Mali, bought an *ngoni*

Skimon Partington; Malu Halasa

three-stringed lute and met up with Tinariwen. He brought all these influences together on his much-praised solo album *Desert Road* (2000) which used African rhythms and was influenced by "things that excite me – Lee Perry, the verve of street singers in Morocco, delta blues from the 30s." After its release he formed a touring group, the Wayward Sheikhs, and later went back to Mali to produce Tinariwen's debut *The Radio Tisdas Sessions*.

Now he came to the attention of Robert Plant. The Led Zeppelin star had been touring with Jimmy Page and an Egyptian orchestra, and wanted to include Arabic influences in his new band, The Strange Sensation. Adams was invited to a rehearsal "and Robert said 'play me one of your riffs.' So I played 'Blue Man', from *Desert Road*, and Robert started singing, adapting blues lyrics, and it became 'Win My Train Fare Home'. It was a moment of magic." He was invited to join the band – of course – and the duo made a memorable recording of the song when they travelled to Festival au Désert, out in the Sahara.

When Plant went off to record with Alison Krauss, Adams remained busy. He produced the classic Tinariwen album *Aman Iman* (2007) in Mali, worked across the Middle East in projects for the British Council, and then started a duo with the Gambian *griot* and *ritti* (one-string fiddle) player Juldeh Camara. Juldeh had heard *Desert Road* and rang Adams "out of the blue, and played the ritti to me down the phone… so I said 'come to my studio.'" They recorded three albums together between 2007-2011 "and toured all over." Meanwhile, Adams became involved in yet more projects, including Les Triaboliques, a trio with Lu Edmonds and Ben Mandelson, who released *rivermudtwilight*, their glorious album of '*distressed string band music*' in 2009. And in 2013 he produced another classic album, *Zoom*, by Algeria's Rachid Taha.

Plant now came back into the story. Adams and Juldeh had added bass and drums to become JuJu, and Plant invited them to become the core of his new Sensational Space Shifters. A memorable live band, they toured the world, bringing an African edge to Plant's rock and Americana, as heard on *lullaby and… The Ceaseless Roar* (2014). Juldeh had returned to Africa by the time the band recorded *Carry Fire* (2017), after which the Space Shifters broke up. While still with the band, Adams recorded the experimental atmospheric solo set *Ribbons* (2017), inspired by Miró and Rothko's art, "because I don't like to be constrained by genres."

While working with Juldeh, he had been invited to play at the La Notte Della Taranta festival in Italy, where he met and played with Mauro Durante, who became a close friend. Adams produced the CGS album *Meridiana* (2021), and in the same year, the duo released their award-winning *Still Moving* (2021). Once COVID-19 restrictions allowed, they began touring together.

"What I *can* do is write a riff a day! They just come out of me – riffs and grooves and atmospheres"

There are more projects, including his continuing work with the Irish accordion player Sharon Shannon: he worked on her latest album *Now!* as well as the Celtic-African fusion of *Sacred Earth* (2017). Then there's his production work for Souad Massi, and – one of my personal favourites – his solo electric guitar treatment of the Irish tune 'She Moved Though the Fair', especially recorded for *The Electric Muse Revisited* (2021), an album I compiled. It's an exquisite tribute to guitarist Davy Graham, who was "doing it first" by mixing North African styles, blues and folk, back in the 60s.

What's next? Well, he has just produced *Fado Camões*, with Portuguese singer LINA_, " I think people are going to like that record." He has also been playing with Dave Smith and Billy Fuller, the JuJu rhythm section, and is planning another album with Mauro Durante, this time with (still secret) female vocals added. Most intriguing of all, he has just recorded an album with Felice Rosser, a Black American singer and bass player who was part of the New York punk scene in the 70s and shares Adams' love of rock, reggae and North African styles.

What does all this music have in common? He replies by explaining that the test for the King's harpist in medieval Scotland was "to make people dance, cry, or sleep. That's a good view of what music should do."

The Wayward Sheikhs (L-R: Andy Cox, Femi Akinde, Adams, Seyi Akinde, Salah Dawson Miller) on their way to Palmyra, Syria

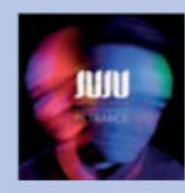
+ LISTEN *'Hummingbird' is on this issue's covermount CD, track 13*

BEST ALBUMS

Desert Road
(Wayward, 2000)
The remarkable first solo album introduced his unique fusion of blues, rock and African styles. There's added percussion on two tracks, but this is otherwise a completely DIY project.

Justin Adams & Juldeh Camara
Tell No Lies
(Real World, 2009)
'No passport, no visa!' yells Adams at the start of a glorious set mixing punk rock energy and blues with wild *ritti* fiddle work and Fulani vocals from Juldeh.

Les Triaboliques
rivermudtwilight
(World Village, 2009)
Adams plays guitar, Lu Edmonds (of Public Image Ltd fame) is on *saz* and *cümbüş*, while Ben Mandelson adds mandolin and banjo to create what this celebrity trio call '*distressed string band music for the 21st century*.'



JuJu
In Trance
(Real World, 2011)
Adams and Juldeh are joined by bass and drums for a set that includes an exuberant near-15-minute work-out, 'Nightwalk'.

Justin Adams feat Anneli Drecker
Ribbons
(Wayward, 2017)
A solo album of compelling, experimental mood pieces in which layered and textured guitar work is matched against vocal effects from Anneli Drecker from the Norwegian Arctic.

Justin Adams & Mauro Durante
Still Moving
(Ponderosa, 2021)
Adams is joined by Durante on violin and frame drum to create an intense, thrilling and emotional fusion of American and North African folk and blues with the *pizzica* styles of southern Italy.

IF YOU LIKE JUSTIN ADAMS, THEN TRY…

Souad Massi
Sequana
(Backingtrack Productions / Wrasse Records, 2022)
The best album in years by the great Algerian singer-songwriter, now expanding her range with the help of Adams' production and guitar.

BIG EARS

March 21-24, 2024 · Knoxville, TN USA

Thursday March 21 **Adrianne Lenker** · **Charles Lloyd** The Sky Will Still Be There Tomorrow
Unwound · **Mary Halvorson** Amaryllis · **Kurt Vile** & the Violators · **Fred Frith** Drawing Sound
Secret Chiefs 3 · **Tord Gustavsen** Trio · **Nik Bärtsch** Ronin · **Colleen** · **Jlin** · **Angelic Brothers** (John Medeski & Kirk Knuffke)
Francesco Turrisi · **Jake Blount** · **Zsela** · **Anssi Karttunen** · **Henry Threadgill** Very Very Circus · **Third Coast Percussion**

Blacktronika Presents: The Signal Paths · Robert Aiki Aubrey Lowe · Tyondai Braxton · Colloboh · Yvette Janine Jackson

Laurie Anderson & Sexmob Let X=X · **Rhiannon Giddens** · **John Paul Jones** **Friday** March 22
Jason Moran & the Harlem Hellfighters · **Brad Mehldau** · **Christian McBride** · **Henry Threadgill** Zooid
Molly Tuttle & Golden Highway · **Hermanos Gutiérrez** · **Mavi** · **Christian McBride & Edgar Meyer** · **Mighty Poplar**
Trio Mediæval · **Trevor Dunn** Trio Convulsant · **Fred Frith & Ikue Mori** · **Kristin Hersh** · **Sam Amidon** · **Chocolate Genius, Inc.**
Darcy James Argue Secret Society · **Resavoir** · **Wayne Horvitz** Gravitas Quartet · **Hurray for the Riff Raff** · **Eyvind Kang & Jessika Kenney**
Molly Lewis · **Slauson Malone 1** · **Titan to Tachyons** · **Yasmin Williams** · **Brandon Ross** Phantom Station · **Tomeka Reid** Quartet
Joanna Sternberg · **Mr. Sun** · **claire rousay** · **Ringdown** (Caroline Shaw & Danni Lee) · **Helen Gillet** · **Anna Webber & Matt Mitchell**
Faun Fables · **Tredici Bacci** · **dragonchild x Sunken Cages** · **Joan Shelley** · **Jana Horn** · **Myriam Gendron**

Blacktronika Presents: Dance Floor as Resistance · Carl Craig · DJ Heather · King Britt · Suzi Analog

Saturday March 23 **Herbie Hancock** · **Kronos Quartet** 50 Years · **Digable Planets**
Christian McBride with **Rhiannon Giddens & Francesco Turrisi** · **Beth Orton** · **Shabaka**
Sons of Chipotle (John Paul Jones & Anssi Karttunen) · **Marc Ribot** Ceramic Dog · **Brad Mehldau & Christian McBride**
Roc Marciano · **Dave Holland** Quartet · **Sleepytime Gorilla Museum** · **Myra Melford** Fire & Water · **The Messthetics** with **James Brandon Lewis**
Bonnie "Prince" Billy · **Colin Stetson** · **Armand Hammer** · **Robin Holcomb** · **Paul Lazar** Cage Shuffle · **Roger Eno**
Cedric Burnside · **Horse Lords** · **Sexmob** · **aja monet** · **Joe Russo** Selcouth Quartet · **Hatis Noit** · **Elliott Sharp & Eric Mingus**
Ash Fure Animal · **David Virelles** · **Fred Frith** (Solo) · **Kassa Overall** · **JJJJJerome Ellis** · **JG Thirlwell** + Ensemble
Kokoroko · **Ka Baird** · **Henry Threadgill** Make a Move · **Son Rompe Pera** · **Leyla McCalla** · **Bitchin Bajas**

Blacktronika Presents: Future Funk · Brandon Coleman · Charlie Dark MBE · Dibia$e · Computer Jay

Jon Batiste · **Silk Road Ensemble** with **Rhiannon Giddens** **Sunday** March 24
Henry Threadgill with **Vijay Iyer & Dafnis Prieto** · **Julian Lage** & the Speak to Me Band
John Medeski / Joe Russo / Marc Ribot · **Edgar Meyer** · **Aoife O'Donovan** · **Harvest Time** A Tribute to Pharoah Sanders
Fatoumata Diawara · **billy woods** · **Samora Pinderhughes** · **Cyro Baptista** Chama · **flysiifu** · **Davóne Tines** · **Laugh Ash**
Evan Lurie Quintet with Bandoneon · **Nadah El Shazly** · **Void Patrol** · **Finom** · **Min Xiao-Fen** with River Guerguerian
Sofia Rei & Jorge Roeder · **Aleuchatistas** · **Knoxville Symphony Chamber Orchestra** · **Henry Threadgill** Air · **Tomas Fujiwara** 7 Poets Trio

Blacktronika Presents: Soul of Experimental · Laraaji & Suphala · KMRU · Elsa M'Bala · Low Leaf

TICKETED SEPARATELY
Thursday & Saturday only

La Monte Young & Marian Zazeela: Just Charles & Cello in the Romantic Chord
Performed by Charles Curtis

Nearly 200 Performances, 12+ Venues, Plus Films, Conversations, Exhibitions & More

Full Program plus Weekend and Single Day Passes at BigEarsFestival.org

DISPATCH FROM

Belgrade, Serbia

Martin Longley heads to the Balkans' 'party city' to find turbo folk, tape manipulation, ethnomusicology and, of course, plenty of Gypsy jazz

Belgrade is one of Europe's most intense cities, ideal for folks who love drinking, eating and dancing. It's a clubbing city that often resonates with the darker and grimier sounds of electronics and guitars, rock music crumbled out of shape, its edges spiked. Balkan folk remains vibrant here, and the Belgrade Jazz Festival has a strong international reputation, recently presenting its 39th edition. The mightily adventurous German label Glitterbeat has been here too, bringing attention to Vladimir Lenhart and his Lenhart Tapes project.

Lenhart constructs new music with old tools, his vintage cassette decks chewing up spools of ethno-collage wonderment, much of which he mixes spontaneously, subjecting sounds to bass exaggeration or trebly distortion via a tangle of modern effects units. Vocal snatches feed through the dub density, often robbed from old cassettes, but there is also live song contributed by a trio of singers, entering into the mesh. Lenhart recently appeared at BALKAN:MOST in Veszprém, Hungary, joined by Svetlana Spajić, one of his vocal collaborators. They closed off the festival with an extreme blend of soaring song and plummeting bass quakes, distressed by multiple layers of mid-range disorder. Lenhart is far more extreme live than on record.

Songlines met up with him the following month, at the Idiott Bar, next to Belgrade's Jevremovac Botanical Garden. "I'm pretty young in folk music," Lenhart admits. "My musical background is not folk at all. I grew up with heavy metal, experimental stuff, some free jazz, and some noise and punk. The folk came after all that, in my late 20s and early 30s. Back in the old days, folk was something to make fun of, but when I got older I took it more seriously. I started to dig around, to find what I liked, and what I didn't like. It's not so much about Serbian folk music, that would be just a part of this folk sound that I started to embrace."

Indeed, during his live set, there were stray sonics that sounded like they might be arriving from Laos, Tibet or Tanzania. "I make a blend of various genres that I really like," he says. "I'm placing the folk music in a unique mix… In a blender, and I see what kind of juice comes out."

Lenhart says that it's difficult to dissect Serbian roots music, due to the ethnic diversity of the land, and beyond, into old Yugoslavia, and outwards around the Balkans generally. He himself is part of a micro-culture of Slovakians dwelling in Serbia, creating a unique character of displacement. Lenhart's father was a singer of Slovakian songs back in the 1960s.

The latest album, *Dens*' repertoire combines traditional tunes with original improvisations. No lines are clear, here. The first of the three singers that Lenhart worked with was Tijana Stanković. "When we met, I was already digging these folk tunes," Lenhart continues. "I was already interested in mixing noise music with ethno-tunes. She was an ethnomusicology student, so she provided me with a whole bunch of field recording material. She's also an established violin player and singer, so she was a really good interpreter of the songs. This idea came really naturally, to record her and then play live."

Vladimir Lenhart (Lenhart Tapes) at his mixing desk

Aleksa Vitorović

How are the pieces constructed in the studio? "On the new album we did the recording simultaneously, but on the previous album, I recorded the vocals first, in a particular tempo." Lenhart plays mostly in urban clubs, around Belgrade and Novi Sad. In 2024, he will be touring and appearing at several festivals which present genres of differing persuasions. In November, he launched *Dens* in the arty part of Belgrade.

In the bohemian lower Dorćol area of the city lies the recently opened BAM (Balkan Academy of Music) club. It's operated by Hayden Chisholm, a New Zealand alto saxophonist. It's part jazz haunt and part folk den, with the hyperactive fiddler Paganini playing wedding party tunes, the quirky basement crammed with all-night revellers. BAM is littered with retro artefacts and furniture, boasting the only urinal ever witnessed that has a frontal leather headrest nailed to the wall.

"At the moment, Paganini is playing three nights a week," says Chisholm. "It's pretty good, it's the season for us. The jazz and folk can overlap. That can be good or challenging, because they're very different audiences… It needs some careful curating. I've had some good experiences, some not so good, but I'm definitely going to keep doing this… I think that both musics can benefit. The best times have been when the jazz musicians join in with Paganini's crew, and sometimes vice versa…"

Chisholm has collaborated with the pan-Balkan vocal quintet PJEV, recently releasing the *Medna Roso* album, which also featured organist Kit Downes. PJEV hail from Zagreb, addressing a varied repertoire of post-Yugoslavian a capella folk songs. They recorded this meditational album in church surroundings, but PJEV's own live set takes vocal interaction further, operating at a much more dynamic and energised level, their tightrope interactions creating a magnificently resonant tension.

On the way to BAM, it's recommended to drop into the Beer Sheep shop, on Balkanska, where you're very likely to hear Anatolian trance pulsations, while hanging out to sup your local Dogma Brewery IPA. ◆

JANUARY-MARCH 2024

Gig Guide

Béla Fleck with his *My Bluegrass Heart* band

Alan Messer

Songlines picks...

Mama Afrika (Jan 27 – Mar 17, On Tour) One-woman show from Zimbabwe's Anna Mudeka celebrating the life of the iconic Miriam Makeba

Béla Fleck (Feb 1-4, On Tour) First bluegrass tour in 24 years for the banjo master who will be joined by a crack team of Flecktones

N'Faly Kouyaté (Feb 8-18, On Tour) The Guinean *griot* and Afro Celt is back with a new album and has his heart set on *Ré-Génération*

YĪN YĪN (Feb 15-18, On Tour) The Netherlands' premier south-east Asian psych-funk quartet hit the UK to showcase their new album *Mount Matsu*

Orkney Folk Festival (Feb 16-17, London) Workshops and concerts give Kings Place a little taste of Orkney's famously fine folk festivities

LONDON

26-27 JAN Burns Night Ceilidh & Family Ceilidh Grand Junction thenestcollective.co.uk; **27 JAN Acid Arab** Electric Brixton; **Band of Burns** Kings Place; **27-28 JAN The Bhavan's Founders Day** The Bhavan bhavan.net; **28 JAN Manara** Cafe OTO; **Sivan Perwer** indigo at The O2; **29 JAN Getz/Gilberto 60th Anniversary** Jazz Cafe thejazzcafelondon.com; **31 JAN Femi Oriogun-Williams** Cecil Sharp House; **Hengām Ensemble** Kings Place; **Plínio Fernandes & Braimah Kanneh-Mason** Jazz Cafe; **2 FEB Duncan Chisholm** Kings Place; **3 FEB The Magpie Arc Indoor Festival of Folk** Cecil Sharp House; **Shkoon** KOKO; **4 FEB Béla Fleck** Cadogan Hall; **5 FEB ArHai** Green Note; **5-6 FEB KODO** Barbican; **6 FEB Airboxes** The Betsey Trotwood; **Mario Bakuna & Andria Antoniou** The Pheasantry; **7 FEB Fatoumata Diawara** KOKO; **Jim Causley & Bill Murray's Wassail** Cecil Sharp House; **8 FEB Salsa Queen** Queen of the South Pub queenofthesouthpub.co.uk; **Fran Barrett & Jess Collins** Soho Folk and Blues; **9 FEB Çigdem Aslan & Živorad Nikolic** World Heart Beat Embassy Gardens; **Shreya Ghoshal** OVO Arena Wembley; **Martin Carthy** Kalamazoo Klub; **10 FEB Manu Dibango Orchestra** Ronnie Scott's; **11 FEB Melodious Metaphors: Bengali Music, Dance & Poetry** Rich Mix FREE richmix.org.uk; **Tim Bernardes** eartH; **12 FEB Hiba Tawaji** Cadogan Hall; **15 FEB Bharat Mahotsav Festival** The Bhavan FREE bhavan.net; **Blick Bassy** Jazz Cafe; **Pisco Sour** Elgar Room at Royal Albert Hall; **The Miras Silk Road Collective** Grand Junction; **The Fontanas** PizzaExpress Live Holborn; **16 FEB YĪN YĪN** Village Underground; **Pradeep Kumar** OVO Arena Wembley; **Kris Drever** Kings Place; **16-17 FEB Orkney Folk Festival** Kings Place kingsplace.co.uk; **17 FEB Orquesta Mambarito** The Portico; **Sara Correia** Cadogan Hall; **Kevin Haynes Grupo Elegua** Ronnie Scott's; **18 FEB Alireza Ghorbani** Barbican; **Rakesh Chaurasia + Shashank Subramanyam** Cadogan Hall; **20 FEB Fishclaw** The Slaughtered Lamb; **Seckou Keita** Jazz Cafe; **21 FEB Rhiannon Giddens** Barbican; **22 FEB Owen Spafford & Louis Campbell** Hackney Folk Club; **Al-Qasar** The Forge; **Baluji Shrivastav's Jazz Orient** Elgar Room at Royal Albert Hall; **23 FEB Grupo Lokito** The Portico; **Javed Ali** indigo at The O2; **Mossy Christian & Megan Wisdom** Kings Place; **25 FEB Ryan Young** Kings Place; **28 FEB Daud Khan + Milad Yousefi** Brunei Gallery at SOAS; **Sambroso All Stars present the Buena Vista** PizzaExpress Jazz Club Soho; **The Copper Family** Cecil Sharp House; **29 FEB Orphean Sprig** Green Note; **Shunsuke Kimura, Etsuro Ono & Kit Downes** Kings Place; **London Django Collective** PizzaExpress Jazz Club Soho; **1 MAR Jibanananda Festival** Rich Mix FREE richmix.org.uk; **Laura Cannell + Stick in the Wheel** Cafe OTO; **2 MAR Matt McGinn** The Harrison; **3 MAR Srishti: Pathways** The Bhavan; **Erkan Oğur & İsmail Hakki Demircioğlu** EartH; **4 MAR Imagining Ireland** Barbican barbican.org.uk; **Blazin' Fiddles** Kings Place; **5 MAR Omar Rios Quartet** PizzaExpress Jazz Club Soho; **6 MAR Osibisa** Jazz Cafe; **Alex Wilson & Omar Puente Quartet** PizzaExpress Jazz Club Soho; **7 MAR Afghan Youth Orchestra** Queen Elizabeth Hall; **8 MAR Malkit Singh** Royal Festival Hall; **10 MAR Bongeziwe Mabandla** eartH; **10 MAR Jards Macalé** Jazz Cafe.

SOUTH

27 JAN Reg Meuross, Suntou Susso & Cohen Braithwaite-Kilcoyne The David Hall, South Petherton; **Simon Mayor, Hilary James & Friends** Grayshott Folk Club, Hindhead; **28 JAN Reg Meuross, Suntou Susso & Cohen Braithwaite-Kilcoyne** Topsham Folk Club; **3 FEB KODO** The Anvil,

songlines.co.uk/gig-guide All information correct at time of going to press. Email listings for print and online consideration to listings@songlines.co.uk

Basingstoke; **Maddy Prior & Forgotten Lands** St Dunstan's Church, Cranbrook; **9 FEB The Longest Johns** The Mowlem Swanage; **10 FEB Counter's Creek** Winfrith Village Hall; **Piva** Halsway Manor, Crowcombe; **Martin Carthy** Hyde Tavern, Winchester; **11 FEB Jim Causley** Launceston Folk Club; **Counter's Creek** Wootton Fitzpaine Village Hall; **15 FEB Granny's Attic** Halsway Manor, Crowcombe; **16 FEB Catrin Finch & Aoife Ní Bhriain** Marine Theatre, Lyme Regis; **17 FEB Pipes and Gurdies** Halsway Manor, Crowcombe halswaymanor.org.uk; **18 FEB YĪN YĪN** Patterns, Brighton; **The Wilderness Yet** Stanstead Abbotts Concert Society; **24 FEB Ryan Young** Salisbury Arts Centre; **Catrin Finch** The David Hall, South Petherton; **Adam Beattie** Grayshott Folk Club, Hindhead; **25 FEB Jim Causley** St Albans Folk Club; **26 FEB Dele Sosimi Afrobeat Quintet** St John's College, Oxford FREE; **28 FEB North Sea Gas + Orphean Sprig** Baldock Folk Club; **Jim Causley** Poppy's Folk & Acoustic Club, Camberley; **29 FEB Moonrakers** Halsway Manor, Crowcombe; **1 MAR Orphean Sprig** The Song Loft, Milton Keynes; **New Regency Orchestra** Brighton Dome; **2 MAR Northumbrian Smallpipes: Andy May + Others** Halsway Manor, Crowcombe halswaymanor.org.uk; **Seckou Keita** The David Hall, South Petherton.

WALES & WEST

31 JAN Forgotten Songs and Stories Bristol Beacon bristolbeacon.org; **1 FEB Lankum** Bristol Beacon; **2 FEB Juan Martín** Ludlow Assembly Rooms; **4 FEB Maddy Prior & Forgotten Lands** Acapela Studio, Cardiff; **6 FEB Fatoumata Diawara** Bristol Beacon; **15 FEB RANT** The New Room, Bristol; **Catrin Finch & Aoife Ní Bhriain** St George's Bristol; **16 FEB RANT** Ludlow Assembly Rooms; **17 FEB YĪN YĪN** Strange Brew, Bristol; **Rakesh Chaurasia + Shashank Subramanyam** St George's Bristol; **The Wilderness Yet** Whitchurch Folk Club; **22 FEB Ryan Young** St George's, Bristol; **24 FEB Fishclaw** Prema Arts Centre, Uley; **29 FEB Seckou Keita** Lost Horizon, Bristol; **1 MAR Heather Ferrier** St George's Bristol; **7 MAR Rachael McShane & The Cartographers** St George's Bristol.

MIDLANDS

27 JAN Martin Carthy & Jon Wilks The Cut, Halesworth; **28 JAN Hedera** Black Fen Folk Club, Cambridge; **1 FEB KODO** Warwick Arts Centre; **Orphean Sprig** Commemoration Hall, Huntingdon; **3 FEB John Kirkpatrick** Locks Inn, Bungay; **9 FEB The Brothers Gillespie** National Forest Folk Club, Ashby-de-la-Zouch; **Juan Martín** Stamford Arts Centre; **15 FEB** [1pm] **Muntu Valdo** Symphony Hall, Birmingham FREE; **16 FEB Jimmy Aldridge & Sid Goldsmith** Blaxhall Sessions; **17 FEB** [1pm] **Midday Mantra: Indian Classical** Symphony Hall, Birmingham sampad.org.uk; **22 FEB Rhiannon Giddens** Birmingham Town Hall; **23 FEB Jim Causley** Everyman Folk Club, Saxmundham; **24 FEB Javed Ali** Morningside Arena, Leicester; **27 FEB Srishti: Pathways** The Albany Theatre, Coventry; **1 MAR Seckou Keita** Mama Roux's, Birmingham.

NORTH

26-27 JAN Burns Night Spanish City, Whitley Bay spanishcity.co.uk; **27 JAN Lankum** Boiler Shop, Newcastle upon Tyne; **29 JAN Plínio Fernandes & Braimah Kanneh-Mason** Band on the Wall, Manchester; **31 JAN** [1pm] **Eeshar Singh & Jeevan Singh** The Venue, Leeds FREE; **2 FEB Mambo King: A Musical Tribute to Tito Puente** Band on the Wall, Manchester bandonthewall.org; **Fatoumata Diawara** New Century Hall, Manchester; **Hedera** Open Source Arts, Leeds; **Emily Portman** Lowther Pavilion, Lytham St Annes; **4 FEB Hedera** Highfield Trinity Methodist Church, Sheffield; **10 FEB The Brothers Gillespie** Wylam Institute; **Kasai Masai** Cape to Cairo, Shildon; **11 FEB Shreya Ghoshal** AO Arena, Manchester; **15 FEB O'Hooley & Tidow** East Riding Theatre, Beverley; **YĪN YĪN** The White Hotel, Manchester; **16 FEB The Sam Kelly Trio** East Riding Theatre, Beverley; **Gnoss** HepworthLIVE, Holmfirth; **17 FEB RANT** Brewery Arts, Kendal; **The Often Herd** East Riding Theatre, Beverley; **Martin Carthy** Arnside Sailing Club; **18 FEB** [12.45pm] **Anastasiya Voytyuk & Troye Zillia** East Riding Theatre, Beverley; **Gustavo Andvade & The Brazukas** Band on the Wall, Manchester; **RANT** Otley Courthouse; **23 FEB Johnny Campbell** Wetherby Folk Club; **24 FEB** [1pm] **The Attuned Quartet** The Capstone Theatre, Liverpool; [workshop + gig] **Kanchan Maradan, Hamit Walia & Noman Raja** Billingtons Oldham; **The Often Herd** Coniston Institute; **25 FEB Javed Ali** Tyne Theatre & Opera House, Newcastle upon Tyne; **28 FEB John Kirkpatrick** Cafe#9, Sheffield; **29 FEB John Kirkpatrick** The Welly Folk Club, Billingham; **Priti Kaur** Seven Arts, Leeds; **2 MAR Srishti: Pathways** New College Bradford; **6 MAR Johnny Campbell** Nether Edge Folk Club, Sheffield.

SCOTLAND

1 FEB Béla Fleck Royal Concert Hall, Glasgow (see celticconnections.com for more shows in Glasgow until Feb 4); **3 FEB Lankum** Barrowland Ballroom, Glasgow; **15 FEB The Brothers Gillespie** Cumbernauld Folk Club; **17 FEB Tyler Childers** Barrowland Ballroom, Glasgow; **23 FEB Rhiannon Giddens** Pavilion Theatre, Glasgow.

IRELAND

(Republic & Northern)

3 FEB Béla Fleck Vicar St, Dublin; **15 FEB Tyler Childers** 3Olympia Theatre; **16 FEB Christy Moore** Vicar Street, Dublin; **21 & 29 FEB Christy Moore** Mullingar Park Hotel; **22 FEB John Francis Flynn** Theatre Royal, Waterford; **25 FEB Rhiannon Giddens** Vicar Street, Dublin; **29 FEB ØXN** Vicar Street, Dublin; **8 MAR Christy Moore** Slieve Russell Hotel, Cavan.

TOURS

The Breath

Folk duo tours new album

27 JAN Barony Hall, Glasgow; **9 FEB** Ropery Hall, Barton-upon-Humber; **10 FEB** The Kirkgate, Cockermouth; **16 FEB** The Live Room, Saltaire; **18 FEB** Connolly's of Leap; **20 FEB** Monroes, Galway; **22 FEB** Moynihan's Clonmel; **23 FEB** Séamus Ennis Arts Centre, Naul. *thebreathmusic.com*

Janice Burns & Jon Doran

Mandolin, guitar and vocals

29 JAN Glasgow Royal Concert Hall; **3 FEB** Cecil Sharp House, London; **24 FEB** Warkworth Memorial Hall; **1 MAR** Escleyside Hall; **2 MAR** Wem Town Hall; **3 MAR** Priest Weston Village Hall; **9 MAR** Tolbooth, Stirling. *Janandjon.com*

Celtic Fiddle Festival

Celebrating three Celtic traditions

29 JAN The Apex, Bury St Edmunds; **30 JAN** The Market Theatre, Ledbury; **31 JAN** Settle Victoria Hall; **1 FEB** Mackintosh Queen's Cross, Glasgow; **2 FEB** The Queen's Hall, Edinburgh; **3 FEB** Byre Theatre, St Andrews. *celtic-fiddle-festival.com*

Brìghde Chaimbeul

Purveyor of Scottish smallpipes

20 FEB National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh; **21 FEB** [+ Cerys Hafana] Strange Brew, Bristol; **22 FEB** Round Chapel, London; **23 FEB** The Old Malt House, Chidham; **24 FEB** Lighthouse, Poole; **25 FEB** The Forge, Basingstoke. *brichaimbeul.com*

Manu Delago

Exploring the Swiss Hang drum

8 FEB Upper Chappel, Sheffield; **9 FEB** Metronome, Nottingham; **10 FEB** Music Room, Liverpool; **11 FEB** Bristol Beacon; **13 FEB** Round Chapel, London; **14 FEB** Summerhall, Edinburgh; **15 FEB** Mono, Glasgow; **16 FEB** Cobalt Studios, Newcastle upon Tyne. *manudelago.com*

Niamh Dunne, Bróna McVittie, Cormac Breatnach & Seán Óg Graham

Four Irish musicians collaborate

6 FEB Station House Theatre, Clifden; **8 FEB** Riverbank Arts Centre, Newbridge; **9 FEB** Triskel Arts Centre, Cork; **10 FEB** National Opera House, Wexford; **11 FEB** Pavilion Theatre, Dún Laoghaire; **13 FEB** The Sugar Club, Dublin; **14 FEB** Belltable, Limerick; **15 FEB** Siamsa Tíre, Tralee; **16 FEB** Ionad Cultúrtha, Ballyvourney; **17 FEB** Courthouse Arts Centre, Tinahely. *musicnetwork.ie*

Fairport Convention

With support from Plumhall

6 FEB The Stables, Milton Keynes; **7 FEB** Palace Theatre, Southend-on-Sea; **8 FEB** The Eric Morecambe Centre, Harpenden; **9 FEB** Penistone Paramount; **10 FEB** Tung Auditorium, Liverpool; **11 FEB** RNCM, Manchester; **13 FEB** The Apex, Bury St Edmunds; **14 FEB** New Vic Theatre, Newcastle under Lyme; **15 FEB** Oxford Playhouse; **16 FEB** Loughborough Town Hall; **17 FEB** The Maltings, Farnham; **18 FEB** Gulbenkian, Canterbury; **20 FEB** Chequer Mead Theatre, East Grinstead; **21 FEB** The Connaught, Worthing; **22 FEB** Turner Sims, Southampton; **23 FEB** The Forum, Bath; **24 FEB** The Taliesin, Swansea; **25 FEB** Exeter Corn Exchange; **27 FEB** The Drill, Lincoln; 28 Feb ARC, Stockton-on-Tees; **29 FEB** The Fire Station, Sunderland; **1 MAR**

Gig Guide

Harrogate Theatre; **2 MAR** The Grand Pavilion, Matlock Bath; **3 MAR** Stratford Playhouse; **5 MAR** William Aston Hall, Wrexham; **6 MAR** Castle Hall, Bridgnorth; **7 MAR** Theatr Brycheiniog, Brecon; **8 MAR** The Roses, Tewkesbury; **9 MAR** Union Chapel, London; **10 MAR** Dudley Town Hall. *fairportconvention.com*

Fara
Scotland's fiddle-led quartet

3 FEB [+ Genticorum] Glasgow Royal Concert Hall; **17 FEB** Kings Place, London; **18 FEB** Nettleham Live; **19 FEB** The Fleece Inn, Evesham; **20 FEB** Norden Farm, Maidenhead; **22 FEB** CatStrand, New Galloway; **23 FEB** Corn Exchange, Haddington; **24 FEB** Forfar Reid Hall. *faramusic.co.uk*

Cerys Hafana
Master of the Welsh triple harp

31 JAN Unitarian Church, Shrewsbury; **1 FEB** Galeri, Caernarfon; **2 FEB** Trawsnewid Festival, Aberystwyth; **15 FEB** The Kitchen Garden Cafe, Birmingham; **17 FEB** The Forge, Basingstoke; **18 FEB** Moth Club, London; **19 FEB** The Greys, Brighton; **20 FEB** Boileroom, Guildford; **21 FEB** [+ Brìghde Chaimbeul] Strange Brew, Bristol; **22 FEB** Square Chapel, Halifax; **23 FEB** Café#9, Sheffield; **29 FEB** RWCMD, Cardiff. *ceryshafana.com*

Kit Hawes & Aaron Catlow
Intimate fiddle, guitar and voice

25 FEB Folk on the Moor, Wotter; **28 FEB** Town Hall, Middlesbrough; **2 MAR** Bristol Folk House; **3 MAR** The Prince Albert, Stroud; **4 MAR** Green Note, London; **6 MAR** Cramlington Folk Club; **7 MAR** Black Swan Folk Club, York; **9 MAR** Hyde Tavern, Winchester; **10 MAR** Café#9, Sheffield; **11 MAR** Glenfarg Folk Club; **13 MAR** Willows Folk Club, Preston; **14 MAR** Crail Folk Club, Fife; **15 MAR** The Argyle & Cellar Bar, Edinburgh. *kitandaaron.com*

Kitewing
Two acclaimed folk outfits

5 FEB Colchester Arts Centre; **13 FEB** Norwich Arts Centre; **14 FEB** The Harrison, London; **16 FEB** House Concert, Lincolnshire; **17 FEB** Canopy Theatre, Beccles. *kitewingmusic.com*

N'Faly Kouyaté
Of Afro Celt Sound System

8 FEB Turner Sims, Southampton; **10 FEB** Centenary Arts, Peel; **13 FEB** The Bullingdon, Oxford; **14 FEB** Exeter Pheonix; **15 FEB** Band on the Wall, Manchester; **16 FEB** Music Room, Liverpool; **17 FEB** Blackheath Halls, London; **18 FEB** Colchester Arts Centre. *nfaly.com*

Seth Lakeman
20th anniversary of Kitty Jay

2 FEB Tramway, Glasgow; **20 FEB** Exeter Corn Exchange; **21 FEB** St George's Bristol; **22 FEB** St George's Church, Brighton; **23 FEB** The Apex, Bury St Edmunds; **24 FEB** Buxton Opera House; **25 FEB** The Stables, Milton Keynes; **26 FEB** Storyhouse, Chester; **27 FEB** The Stoller Hall, Manchester; **28 FEB** Town Hall, Birmingham; **29 FEB** Union Chapel, London. *sethlakeman.co.uk*

The Magpie Arc
Five stars of British folk

30 JAN Celtic Connections, Glasgow; **2 FEB** St Edith Folk, Sevenoaks; **9 FEB** Love Folk Festival, Southport; **10 FEB** Wiltshire Music Centre, Bradford on Avon; **11 FEB** Exeter Phoenix; **18 FEB** The Firestation, Sunderland; **22 FEB** The Junction, Goole; **24 FEB** The Met, Bury. *themagpiearc.com*

Daniel Martinez
And his Flamenco Company

27 JAN Reading Town Hall; **28 JAN** Old Market, Brighton; **2 FEB** Derby Cathedral; **3 FEB** The Stoller Hall, Manchester; **4 FEB** Lawrence Batley Theatre, Huddersfield; **22 FEB** Albany Theatre, Coventry; **23 FEB** Brangwyn Hall, Swansea; **24 FEB** [two shows] St George's Bristol; **25 FEB** Tung Auditorium, Liverpool; **29 FEB** Empire Theatre, Inverness; **1 MAR** Albert Halls, Nottingham; **2 MAR** Gloucester Guildhall; **7 MAR** Middlesbrough Theatre; **8 MAR** Octagon Centre, Sheffield; **9 MAR** Turner Sims, Southampton; **10 MAR** Exeter Corn Exchange; **14 MAR** Preston Playhouse; **15 MAR** Town Hall, Birmingham; **16 MAR** Hull Truck Theatre; **17 MAR** City Varieties Music Hall, Leeds. *danielmartinezflamenco.com*

McGoldrick, McCusker & Doyle
Folk's fabulous triumvirate

22 FEB Brudenell Social Club, Leeds; **23 FEB** Settle Victoria Hall; **24 FEB** Brewery Arts, Kendal; **25 FEB** The Fleece Inn, Evesham; **26 FEB** Nettlebed Folk Club, Henley-on-Thames; **28 FEB** Ropetackle, Shoreham-by-Sea; **29 FEB** Portsmouth Guildhall. *johnmccusker.co.uk*

Anna Mudeka
A homage to Miriam Makeba

27 JAN Norwich Playhouse; **1 FEB** The Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton; **2 FEB** Hull Truck Theatre; **3 FEB** More Music, Morecambe; **22 FEB** RWCMD, Cardiff; **24 FEB** [with The African Choir of Norfolk] Narthex Centre, Norwich; **1 MAR** Wells Maltings, Wells-next-the-Sea; **2 MAR** The Cut, Halesworth; **14 MAR** Roxy Upstairs, Edinburgh; **17 MAR** Rich Mix, London. *annamudeka.co.uk*

Belinda O'Hooley
Northern, political, poetical folk

1 FEB Huntingdon Hall, Worcester; **6 FEB** Green Note, London; **7 FEB** Red Lion Folk Club, Birmingham; **8 FEB** South Street, Reading; **9 FEB** St Lawrence's Church, Biddulph; **10 FEB** All Hallows Church, Leeds; **12 FEB** Dean Wood Golf Club, Skelmersdale; **22 FEB** Unicorn Theatre, Abingdon; **23 FEB** The Greystones, Sheffield; **27 FEB** Turner Sims, Southampton; **28 FEB** St Nicholas Church, Harwich; **1 MAR** Kirk Theatre, Pickering; **2 MAR** Slaithwaite Civic Hall, Huddersfield. *ohooleyandtidow.com*

The Olllam
Irish folk meets Detroit psych

26 JAN* Band on the Wall, Manchester; **27 JAN**** Celtic Connections, Glasgow; **28 JAN*** Liverpool Arts Club; **29 JAN*** Bristol Beacon; **30 JAN*** Jazz Cafe, London; **31 JAN** Black Box, Belfast; **1 FEB** Cyprus Avenue, Cork; **3 FEB*** Guildhall, Derry; **4 FEB*** Vicar Street, Dublin. *+ Siomha; **+ RURA. *theolllam.com*

Outliers
Jenny Sturgeon & Boo Hewerdine

7 FEB Eden Court, Inverness; **8 FEB** Perth Theatre; **9 FEB** Wrecking Ball Arts Centre, Hull; **10 FEB** Wadsworth Community Centre, Hebden Bridge; **11 FEB** Cornerhouse, Surbiton; **12 FEB** The Prince Albert, Stroud; **13 FEB** The Kitchen Garden Cafe, Birmingham. *jennysturgeonmusic.com*

São Paulo Dance Company
Classical and Latin dance fusion

5-6 FEB Bord Gáis Energy Theatre, Dublin; **9-10 FEB** Sadler's Wells, London; **13-14 FEB** Mayflower Theatre, Southampton; **16-17 FEB** Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham; **20-21 FEB** Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury; **23-24 FEB** Theatre Royal, Plymouth; **27-28 FEB** Brighton Dome; **1-2 MAR** Hull New Theatre; **5-6 MAR** Theatre Royal, Newcastle upon Tyne; **8-9 MAR** Alhambra Theatre, Bradford; **12-13 MAR** The Lowry, Salford Quays; **15-16 MAR** Wolverhampton Grand Theatre; **19-20 MAR** Eden Court, Inverness; **22-23 MAR** Theatre Royal Norwich. *danceconsortium.com*

Sharon Shannon
The Irish accordionist with band

27 JAN Social Live, Donegal; **1 FEB** The Brewery, Kendal; **2 FEB** Masham Town Hall; **3 FEB** Selby Town Hall; **4 FEB** The Blues Kitchen, Manchester; **6 FEB** The Greystones, Sheffield; **7 FEB** St Andrews Church, Hertford; **8 FEB** The Apex, Bury St Edmunds; **9 FEB** Nortons, Birmingham; **10 FEB** Kings Place, London; **11 FEB** Ropetackle, Shoreham-by-Sea; **13 FEB** Civic Hall, Totnes; **14 FEB** Marine Theatre, Lyme Regis; **15 FEB** The Arc, Winchester; **16 FEB** The Pound, Corsham; **17 FEB** Music Room, Liverpool; **18 FEB** Acapela, Cardiff; **23 FEB** Esker Arts Centre, Tullamore; **1 MAR** Solstice Arts Centre, Navan. *sharonshannon.com*

Shen Yun
Chinese performing arts troupe

26 JAN-4 FEB Eventim Apollo, London; **7-8 FEB** Venue Cymru, Llandudno; **10 FEB** Liverpool Empire; **13-15 FEB** SEC Armadillo, Glasgow; **20-25 FEB** The Lowry, Salford. *shenyun.com*

Spiers & Boden
The originators of Bellowhead

28 FEB Settle Victoria Hall; **29 FEB** Regal, Tenbury Wells; **1 MAR** Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall, Uffington; **2 MAR** Wiltshire Music Centre, Bradford-on-Avon; **3 MAR** mac, Birmingham; **4 MAR** Maddermarket Theatre, Norwich. *spiersandboden.com*

Gordie Tentrees & Jaxon Haldane
Superb Canadian folk duo

27 JAN Cape to Cairo, Shildon; **28 JAN** Cafe Under The Spire, Gateshead; **30 JAN** The Blue Lamp, Aberdeen; **31 JAN** Edinburgh Folk Club; **1 FEB** Celtic Connections, Glasgow; **2 FEB** The Border Club, Hawick; **3 FEB** Coldingham Village Hall; **4 FEB** The Wee Gig, Biggar; **5 FEB** The Kitchen Garden Café, Birmingham. *tentrees.ca*

Transatlantic Sessions
A host of brilliant artists

2 & 4 FEB Glasgow Royal Concert Hall; **5 FEB** Usher Hall, Edinburgh; **6 FEB** The Glasshouse, Gateshead; **7 FEB** Opera House, Buxton; **8 FEB** Beacon, Bristol; **9 FEB** Liverpool Philharmonic Hall; **10 FEB** Symphony Hall, Birmingham; **11 FEB** Royal Festival Hall, London. *transatlanticsessions.com*

ROPETACKLE
ARTS CENTRE

BRINGING YOU A WORLD OF GREAT MUSIC

MUSIC HIGHLIGHTS COMING THIS SEASON.

FEBRUARY

THEA GILMORE Saturday 3rd
SHARON SHANNON TRIO Sunday 11th
OYSTERBAND Tuesday 13th/Wednesday 14th
MAD DOG MCREA Friday 16th
MCGOLDRICK, MCCUSKER & DOYLE Wednesday 28th

MARCH

PEATBOG FAERIES Thursday 7th
A NIGHT IN THE CANYON Thursday 21st
BONZO BILLS Friday 22nd
SAIDI KANDA & MVULA-MANDONDO Saturday 30th

APRIL

SHOW OF HANDS Saturday 6th
SARAH GILLESPIE Friday 12th
ELIZA CARTHY Saturday 13th
DALLAHAN Thursday 18th
OLD TIME SAILORS Sunday 28th

MAY

GILTRAP & ETHERIDGE Thursday 2nd
KATHERINE PRIDDY Saturday 4th
NEWTON FAULKNER Sunday 12th
TALISK Wednesday 15th
ROOTS 8 Friday 17th
JON BODEN Thursday 23rd

WWW.ROPETACKLECENTRE.CO.UK
SHOREHAM-BY-SEA, NR. BRIGHTON, SUSSEX

REGISTERED CHARITY NO: 1109381

MARCH-MAY 2024

Festival Guide

Playing for Change performing at Visa for Music

Jean Berry

REVIEW

Visa for Music

Rabat, Morocco
November 22-25

Visa for Music, in Morocco's capital city, gathered some 50 artists from 30 countries for its tenth anniversary. The opening night was award time, with a prize to Kinshasa's Les Bantus de la Capitale, said to be Africa's eldest band in activity, who would turn Mohammed V Theater into a funky Congolese ball later in the week. Jamaaladeen Tacuma, jazz bassist from Philadelphia who presented a Gnawa and Berber fusion quintet initiated in Essaouira, and the Playing for Change Foundation, with its music school in south-eastern Morocco, would also perform.

The festival founder Brahim El Mazned was presented with a 'Copyright Friendly' label at the event by the president of Cape Verde's Music Society and queen of *morna,* Solange Cesarovna. Referring to the label, which has as its aim to advance royalty collections in Africa through collective work, El Mazned said: "This project initiated in Cape Verde encourages good practices in terms of respecting author rights and the development of fair retribution for composers in Africa, in collaboration with national societies."

The label is given to organisations that comply with paying royalties to music, and hence El Mazned added: "The COVID period, when musicians couldn't perform, showed why its needed here in Morocco. We're also inciting the private sector, like hotels and restaurants, to join the loop and conform to the law."

"I have toured various parts of the world but this is my first concert on [mainland] African soil," claimed Comorian rock singer Eliasse, pointing at the travel issues for African bands.

For him and others, like Geneviève Matibeye (Chad), Sinaubi Zawose & Pamoja (Tanzania), Adédèjì (Nigeria), Tialae (Liberia), Harmony's Brass Band (Benin), Faizal Mostrixx (Uganda) and Balqeis (Egypt), Visa for Music is a unique opportunity to perform abroad.

Also showcasing were Meteor Airlines, from Kalaat M'Gouna, and The Leila, from Oujda, a week after her show at Casablanca's urban music blast L'Boulevard. She represents the emerging modern Moroccan scene.

With artists from some 30 countries managing to make the trip to perform at the four-day event, Visa for Music was something of a miracle. Throughout the years it's welcomed over 2000 artists from 99 countries (45 in Africa), and received no less than 1,500 applications this year. This edition, income on the door was to go to the national fund for last September's earthquake victims.

"We took the opportunity to deliver the first show of our Playing for Change Africa Collective," said Thomas Duncan, programs director of Playing for Change's 23 music projects around the world, including six in Africa. I was lucky enough to follow this new band, which gathered musicians from Morocco, Mali (notably Mamadou Diabaté, Toumani's brother, and Fadimata 'Disco' Walet Oumar, singer of *touareg* band Tartit) and Rwanda (Danny Ntigurirwa and Irene Nishimwe from Ubuntu Music Program), for a week-long residency, including recording sessions in and around Mhamid.

The collective later performed at the second edition of the Zamane Festival, a new event taking place in Mhamid, where they were joined by Italian guitarist Roberto Luti and American bluesman Luke Winslow King for desert music and electric blues encounters.

JEAN BERRY

LISTINGS

Feb 28 – Mar 3
Gathering Festival of Music & Arts
Killarney, Ireland
thegathering.ie

March 2-3
Indian Spring Colours
Durham
gemarts.org

March 3
Asian Spring
Birmingham
sampad.org.uk

March 1-3
North Texas Irish Festival
Dallas, TX, US
ntif.org

March 7-10
Fingal International Festival of Voices
Balbriggan, Co. Dublin, Ireland
Inaugural event for a celebration of singing from across cultures.
fingalfestivalofvoices.com

March 8-11
WOMADelaide
Adelaide, Australia
womadelaide.com.au

March 8-17
Klezmer Festival Fürth
Fürth, Germany
klezmer-festival.de

March 9-10
Pasifika Festival
Auckland, New Zealand
aucklandnz.com/pasifika

March 8-16
SXSW
Austin, TX, US
sxsw.com

March 13-17
Borealis
Bergen, Norway
5 days of experimental music from Norway and Sápmi with a programme curated by Sámi artist Elina Waage Mikalsen.
borealisfestival.no/en

March 15-18
Kilkenny TradFest
Kilkenny, Ireland
kilkennytradfest.com

March 15-17
WOMAD NZ
Taranaki, New Zealand
womad.co.nz

March 21
Early Music Day
Across Europe
earlymusicday.eu

March 21-24
Big Ears
Knoxville, TN, US
bigearsfestival.org

March 28 – April 1
National Folk Festival
Canberra, Australia
folkfestival.org.au

March 28 – April 13
Savannah Music Festival
Savannah, Georgia, US
savannahmusicfestival.org

April 11-13
Budapest Ritmo
Budapest, Hungary
budapestritmo.hu/en

April 25 – May 1
Costa Festival Ibiza
Ibiza, Spain
costafestival.co.uk

April 26-28
Welcome in Tziganie
Seissan, France
A tribute to Macedonia's Ferus Mustafov, his countrymen Kočani Orkestar and Serbia's Unza Unza Orchestra among first to be announced.
welcome-in-tziganie.com

May 2-5
Shetland Folk Festival
Shetland
shetlandfolkfestival.com

May 3-5
SunFest
West Palm Beach, FL, US
sunfest.com

May 3-13
TradFest
Edinburgh
edinburghtradfest.com

May 3 – June 2
Brighton Fringe
Brighton
brightonfringe.org

May 4-26
Brighton Festival
Brighton
With guest curator, screenwriter and novelist Frank Cottrell-Boyce.
brightonfestival.org

May 6-12
Gypsy Jazz Festival of London
London
futurefable.com/gypsyjazz2024

May 10-26
Norfolk & Norwich Festival
Norfolk
nnfestival.org.uk

May 15-18
The Great Escape
Brighton
greatescapefestival.com

May 15-22
Afro-Pfingsten
Winterthur, Switzerland
afro-pfingsten.ch

May 17-19
Festival des Musiciens du Monde
Montreal, Canada
centredesmusiciens dumonde.com

May 17-26
The Bath Festival
Bath, Somerset
bathfestivals.org.uk/the-bath-festival

May 18-20
Music Meeting Festival
Nijmegen, The Netherlands
musicmeeting.nl

**ALL EVENTS ARE UK UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED*

Damon Locks at Big Ears 2022

PREVIEW

Big Ears

WHEN: March 21-24

WHERE: Knoxville, TN, US

What the festival says:

'Founded in 2009, the Big Ears Festival explores the influences that inspire and connect musicians and artists, crossing the boundaries of musical genres as well as artistic disciplines. Every spring, Big Ears presents nearly 200 concerts, talks, workshops, film screenings, residencies and more in over a dozen venues across downtown Knoxville.'

What we said:

'In four days Big Ears afforded inordinate measures of awe, delight and surprise for intrepid music lovers willing to obey the festival's simple slogan: Listen.'

Who's playing?

Where to start? It's a huge line-up, bolstered by the fact that Nonesuch Records will be celebrating their 60th anniversary at the festival and have over a dozen of their artists performing. Chief among them is Rhiannon Giddens who will be playing three sets: a 12-piece ensemble performing her latest album *You're the One*, her *American Railroad* show with the Silkroad Ensemble, and a trio with Christian McBride and Francesco Turrisi. Other Nonesuch alumni will include Yasmin Williams, Sam Amidon, Hurray for the Riff Raff and Molly Tuttle & Golden Highway. Elsewhere, Fatoumata Diawara will be in attendance, both Aoife O'Donovan and Edgar Meyer will be performing with the Knoxville Symphony Chamber Orchestra, Kronos Quartet will be celebrating 50 years with their *Five Decades* show, and their will be bluegrass from supergroup Mighty Poplar and upcoming mandolin virtuoso Wyatt Ellis. There's also Leyla McCalla, Son Rompe Pera, Amythyst Kiah, Myrian Gendron and so much more...

ONLINE: bigearsfestival.org

Eli Johnson

DANCE CONSORTIUM presents

SÃO PAULO

DANCE COMPANY

'The best dance company in Brazil'
DANCING TIMES

UK & IRELAND PREMIERE TOUR 2024

5 & 6 Feb **DUBLIN** Bord Gáis Energy Theatre
9 & 10 Feb **LONDON** Sadler's Wells
13 & 14 Feb **SOUTHAMPTON** Mayflower Theatre
16 & 17 Feb **NOTTINGHAM** Royal Concert Hall
20 & 21 Feb **CANTERBURY** Marlowe Theatre
23 & 24 Feb **PLYMOUTH** Plymouth Theatre Royal
27 & 28 Feb **BRIGHTON** Dome
1 & 2 Mar **HULL** New Theatre
5 & 6 Mar **NEWCASTLE** Theatre Royal
8 & 9 Mar **BRADFORD** Alhambra Theatre
12 & 13 Mar **SALFORD** The Lowry
15 & 16 Mar **WOLVERHAMPTON** Grand Theatre
19 & 20 Mar **INVERNESS** Eden Court
22 & 23 Mar **NORWICH** Theatre Royal

TICKETS & INFO AT
danceconsortium.com

dance consortium

Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

ELIZA CARTHY

Unarguably the queen of English folk
THE OBSERVER

APR	12	NOTTINGHAM	SPAC
APR	13	SHOREHAM	ROPETACKLE
APR	14	WALTON-ON-THAMES	WALTON FOLK
APR	19	BIRMINGHAM	MAC
APR	20	OXFORD	NORTH WALL
APR	25	LONDON	CECIL SHARP HOUSE
APR	26	BRISTOL	FOLK HOUSE
APR	27	SHEFFIELD	GREYSTONES
MAY	10	CAMBRIDGE	STOREY'S FIELD
MAY	11	ALDEBURGH	JUBILEE HALL
MAY	12	LEAMINGTON SPA	TEMPERANCE
MAY	13	LEAMINGTON SPA	SOLD OUT
MAY	17	OTLEY	COURTHOUSE
MAY	18	BARNOLDSWICK	MUSIC & ARTS
MAY	19	HUTTON RUDBY	VILLAGE HALL
JUN	21	SCARBOROUGH	STEPHEN JOSEPH THEATRE
JUN	28	YORK	NCEM
JUN	29	GATESHEAD	SAGE GATESHEAD

BUDA MUSIQUE

PRESENTS

BATSÜKH DORJ
Ögbelerim, Music for my Ancestors
A master of the various overtone styles typical of the Tuvas.

NEGARIT BAND
Origins
The leading orchestra of today's Ethiopian instrumental scene.

AND STILL :

éthiopiques

(30 VOLUMES)

www.budamusique.com

RED HOT CHILLI PIPERS

FEATURING *THE RED HOT CHILLI DANCERS*

NEWCASTLE TYNE THEATRE | MAY 24 2024
HARROGATE ROYAL HALL | MAY 25 2024
LONDON CADOGAN HALL | MAY 26 2024
BUXTON OPERA HOUSE | JUNE 06 2024
CARDIFF TRAMSHED | JUNE 07 2024
BLACKPOOL GRAND THEATRE | JUNE 08 2024
JUNE 13 2024 | BURY ST EDMUNDS THE APEX
JUNE 14 2024 | ST ALBANS ALBAN ARENA
JUNE 15 2024 | CHESTER STORY HOUSE
JUNE 20 2024 | PETERBOROUGH THE CRESSET
JUNE 21 2024 | BIRMINGHAM TOWN HALL
JUNE 22 2024 | CHELTENHAM TOWN HALL

Eliza Carthy's NEWS OF THE WHIRL

Eliza pays tribute to her friend and bandmate Simon Emmerson for his ambitious, idea-laden plan to explore English traditions

The Imagined Village's (L-R) Martin Carthy, Simon Emmerson, Eliza Carthy, Johnny Kalsi & Francis Hylton

Happy New Year! In reflecting upon last year our esteemed ed noted that we have not yet marked the passing of musical polymath, my friend and bandmate Simon Emmerson, by looking at The Imagined Village. In the summer of 2022, we marked ten years since the group's final album by getting back together to play three shows. Simon's cancer was bringing the great man down, but he was still filled with humour, energy and love for the musical family he had brought together. In December 2023, his combined musical families – IV, Afro Celt Sound System and Working Week – celebrated his life at The Roundhouse, so now is a perfect time to remember.

Musician, podcaster and former editor of *fRoots* magazine, Ian Anderson, was part of the band's conception: "I knew Simon through his production work with Baaba Maal. I asked him to produce Tarika's album *Son Egal*, which catapulted the band to popstar status almost overnight in Madagascar. Simply no-one had heard that quality of production there before." Conversations about working with international musicians followed, with Simon pointing out that almost everyone he worked with, whether they were 'folk' musicians or not in their own countries, knew at some level what their own traditions were. He wanted to know about England in the same way. By this time, the end of the 90s, I was aware of Afro Celt Sound System and I sought Simon out. I felt that English contemporary trad/roots music was in some ways the elephant in the room of the burgeoning world music genre. I was about to take that fight to a major label: the idea that there could be English pop based on the distinguishing characteristics of an older music.

Simon was exploring what The Imagined Village could be and Ian sent him field recordings from Topic Records' archives. They discussed an album of Sussex singers The Copper Family; of Asian superstars Najma Akhtar, Sheila Chandra and Susheela Raman singing traditional English songs… John Lydon… PJ Harvey… The Watersons and The Young Tradition bringing darker material for inspiration.

Trans-Global Underground producer Tim Whelan was behind two of what would become The Imagined Village's best-known songs: the epic 'Cold Haily Rainy Night' and 'Tam Lyn Retold', both songs that Martin Carthy (I call him 'Dad') is associated with. Tim described Dad's distinctive guitar style as "almost Touareg" and built the new version of 'Cold Haily Rainy Night' around one of his guitar lines. He was also keen to make a backing track that supported

> "Simon was so good at bringing people together"

and emphasised the style's bass-like punctuation, and to that end brought in Johnny Kalsi (The Dhol Foundation) and *sitarist* Sheema Mukherjee. Sheema remembers: "That was my first experience of English traditional melody, I loved it. The chance to play a tune like that on the *sitar*…" Dad and Sheema remain great friends and when they play together their mutual admiration is clear. Sheema is a particular fan of the Napoleon songs Dad loves and watching her get her chops around a belting north-west 9/4 hornpipe in the band was a thing of wonder.

So, Tim brought Sheema, Johnny and the programmed beats into the fold, Ian brought Tunng, The Gloworms, Chris Wood and The Copper Family, and Simon set about Billy Bragg, Paul Weller, Barney Morse-Brown… and the late, great Benjamin Zephaniah. "Simon was so good at bringing people together," says Sheema. "I don't know how he did it." Original producer Martin Russell left after the first album in 2007, and by the time of the 2010 follow-up *Empire & Love*, Simon Richmond (of Palmskin Productions and The Bays), Ali Friend (Red Snapper) and Jackie Oates were firmly in the mix and this is, for me, when IV turned into a band rather than a collection of ideas.

"The best and most rewarding times for me were when we would be piled into a front room, or someone's guest bedroom, balancing mics on music stands or sitting in [Emmerson's] little studio at the end of his garden in Dorset," recalls Richmond. "No big studios with piles of high-powered gear. Simon was no purist. He would never allow dogma to get in the way of a good idea. Or any idea! I would often think something was finished and he would throw another idea at me. 'Let's do this now!' I have realised though that his creative impulse and lack of fear is something I envied. His gift."

No fear. No fear of bringing huge personalities together, people with a lot to say about their fields, people with… cough…opinions. Sometimes, sitting around a dinner table with Chris Wood at one end and Billy Bragg at the other was a case of listening, rather than talking! The before-show town hall talks we used to do, too, the massed shouting of 'Bollocks to Nick Griffin!' (the BNP leader who professed to being a fan of folk music) at every show, the stuff Simon used to let us get away with (Bhoris Dancers, anyone? Our fusion of Bhangra and morris)… I miss him dearly and will keep that fearlessness and love with me when the reunion happens. Yes, 'when'. ◆

York Tillyer

ANDY KERSHAW

PLAYS SOME BLOODY GREAT RECORDS

listen to Andy's podcasts
www.andykershaw.co.uk

a one man war on musical mediocrity

mixcloud.com/TangentsRadio

Dore Stein

cross-pollinating music radio

TANGENTS.COM

Music Masters Collective and Afropop Worldwide present

CAMP AFROPOP!

Celebrating the music of Africa and Beyond
Hosted by Georges Collinet

A Catskills Music Vacation Experience!
Full Moon Resort, Big Indian, NY
May 28-31, 2024

Featuring:
Natu Camara
Pedrito Martinez
Samba Mapangala
Bakithi Kumalo
Jake Blount
Yakouba Sissoko

Afropop Worldwide

www.campafropop.com

A Benefit Event for Afropop Worldwide

L-R: Gramophone's 'World music' supplement which caused the original grievance; a *Songlines* promo issue from 1998-99 which preceded the first issue; *Songlines* #1, Spring 1999; Simon with Peter Gabriel at WOMAD, 2000

The first-ever *Songlines* hit the shelves in early 1999. Its genesis stemmed from a complaint about what constitutes 'world music', a conundrum we've spent 25 years unravelling

In April 1996 *Gramophone*, the classical music magazine, offered a world music supplement with its latest issue. It included articles on music from across Asia and North Africa. Simon Broughton picked up a copy, and was appalled. "It was very old-fashioned in its approach," he remembers. "It was calling Korean music timeless and meditative, when actually there's so much else going on. I mean it was partly because it was really just looking at classical traditions, but there was nothing on African music or Latin music or any other territory. You can't call something 'world music' and ignore all these other parts of the world and the popular traditions that are going on there." At this point, Broughton had been working on various 'world music'-related projects on radio and TV, including the BBC's *Rhythms of the World* series, and was co-editor of *Rough Guide to World Music*. "As one of the editors on that I had an amazing overview of traditions all over the world, even places that I didn't know much about or had never been to," he recalls. Incensed by *Gramophone*'s treatment of a huge variety of music that was only just being discovered widely in the Anglophone world, he wrote them a letter. Not only did they respond, they invited Broughton to their office.

When they published their next 'world music' supplement in November 1997, Broughton was involved. Flicking through the pages now, he lists what's in there: "there's stuff on folk music in Romania, there's Egyptian popular music, there's an article on revival bands, on the Klezmer revival, on the Cuban revival, which obviously mentions Buena Vista. There's an article on Bulgarian voices, there's Ravi Shankar." World music was seen as a serious area of growth in the music industry and *Gramophone* decided the supplement should become its own thing, a new quarterly magazine on world music, and they asked Broughton to be its editor.

From the start, he was clear about what the magazine should cover. "When people asked me 'what is world music?', I would always say that it was something that had some traditional element in it, never mind how far away it had got from that tradition." He adds: "I was always very aware that there were parts of music around the world that I wasn't particularly interested in or passionate about, but I knew should be there. And then I'd find people who could write interestingly and enthusiastically about it." The hardest thing was going to be coming up with a name. "It really was months and months of discussions," he recalls. "I remember a conversation saying that you can either describe what it is and call it the 'World Music Magazine' or you can come up with something which somehow gives a vibe to what it is. I really didn't like the idea of 'World Music Magazine', partly because already then people didn't like the term 'world music' anymore. I'd read Bruce Chatwin's *The Songlines*, which was sort of about Aboriginal culture, how they have these sung creation myths, and so it's about music linking you to your territory and your homeland. I thought, well, it's not much of an extrapolation to take that idea and make it relevant globally. It's music that somehow comes from some defined place, giving you a sense of identity... That's the sort of feeling I wanted behind *Songlines*."

Songlines arrived in 1999, debuting at WOMAD that same year and establishing itself as the go-to magazine for global music, although even by 2001 it had to face one of its biggest challenges. *Gramophone* and all its sister titles had been bought by Haymarket and following 9/11 there were all-too-real discussions about whether *Songlines* should continue. "Don't quote me on this," says Simon, "but I remember a discussion with someone saying 'we just feel that the interest in music around the world is not going to sustain after this event.'" He laughs: "Maybe there were too many axis-of-evil countries that we were featuring." So, after just 12 issues, *Songlines* took a year off as those who were close to the magazine worked out a way of becoming independent, and it returned in a larger format – the original was A5 – in the summer of 2002.

Why does Simon think it's lasted 25 years while other music magazines haven't? "There is clearly a big enough interest in what we still have to call 'world music', it's become a part of regular music life. There are people interested in what music is out there, why it sounds the way it does, what its history is and who are the interesting new personalities and names. For me it's always been that it's not just about music, it's about culture, politics and current affairs. Music is a way of looking at the world. That's what I've always hammered on about in *Songlines*."

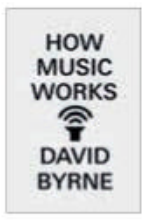
As told by Russ Slater Johnson

Alex Newby/Jon Lusk

SONGLINES ESSENTIAL 10

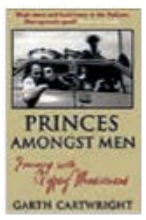
MUSIC BOOKS

Nigel Williamson picks out 10 of his favourite global music reads, all published during *Songlines*' lifetime



01 How Music Works
David Byrne
(Canongate, 2012)

There's plenty here about Talking Heads and David Byrne's adventures in world music – but he also talks profoundly about the philosophy of every aspect of music-making in one of the most thoughtful and insightful books ever written by a working musician. Whether you're a fan of Byrne's oeuvre or not is beside the point – after reading this you will indeed have a much better idea of the wonderful ways in which "music works."

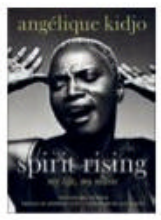


02 Princes Amongst Men
Garth Cartwright
(Serpent's Tail, 2005)

Garth Cartwight has written knowledgeably about east European Gypsy music in the pages of *Songlines* but he's at his best when he's allowed to stretch out as a long-form writer. In this project, he takes a wild ride across Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania and Macedonia, following his musical passion and interviewing more than 20 Gypsy acts along the way. *Princes Amongst Men* sees his encounters related in prose as energetic and effusive as the music Cartwright describes.

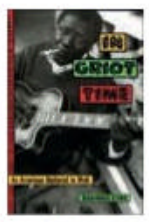
03 America Over the Water
Shirley Collins
(SAF Publising, 2005)

Now the grand dame of English folk song, as a 21 year old in 1959, Shirley Collins travelled the southern states of pre-civil rights America with her lover, the famous folklorist Alan Lomax. This memoir recalls her childhood in Hastings, but the meat of *America Over the Water* chronicles Collins' extraordinary journeys with Lomax in which they discovered Mississippi Fred McDowell and recorded prisoners in the Parchman Farm penitentiary, pentecostal choirs, blind fiddlers, mountain ballad singers and much more.



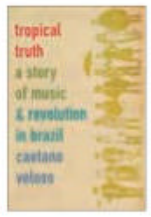
04 Spirit Rising: My Life My Music
Angélique Kidjo & Rachel Wenrick
(Harper Collins, 2014)

With her humanity shining forth on every page, Angélique tells an inspiring tale of her childhood in Benin, how she escaped a despotic regime to pursue her musical career in France and her subsequent rise to fame. Beautifully illustrated, she also shares stories about her work as a UNICEF ambassador and as the founder of a foundation offering African girls access to education – and even a few family recipes.



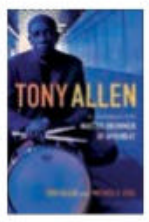
05 In Griot Time
Banning Eyre
(Temple University Press, 2000)

'*White man learns the ways of the griots*' is a path strewn with potential pitfalls but Eyre, the founder of the Afropop Worldwide radio station and website, navigates them with respect and dignity in this splendid account of the seven months in Mali he spent staying and studying with the great Djelimady Tounkara, one-time guitarist with the mighty Rail Band.



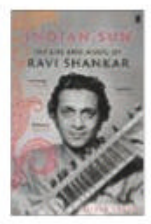
06 Tropical Truth
Caetano Veloso
(Bloomsbury, 2003)

Subtitled '*A Story of Music and Revolution in Brazil*', Veloso's engaging account of his career is part biography, part ethnomusicological treatise and part social history of his country's chequered politics. Above all, as an account of the rise of *tropicália*, and how it encompassed politics, music and personal freedom, it's nothing less than essential.



07 Tony Allen
Tony Allen & Michael E Veal
(Duke University Press, 2013)

There have been plenty of biographies of Fela Kuti over the years but the best account of the birth of Afrobeat and how its inventor became a Nigerian legend is to be found in this memoir by Allen, the leader and rhythm engine of Fela's band for 15 years between 1964 and 1979. Based on hundreds of hours of interviews with the writer Michael E Veal, its conversational tone is rich and engaging.



08 Indian Sun
Oliver Craske
(Faber & Faber, 2020)

Published on the centenary of Shankar's birth, Craske's biography of the great man is thorough and well-researched; he underwent no fewer than 130 new interviews for the project. Shankar's musical genius and his spiritual mission are dealt with expertly while his complicated private life – an alleged 180 girlfriends – is handled diplomatically to make this the definitive portrait of a very human legend.

09 Soweto Blues
Gwen Ansell
(Continuum, 2004)

This chronological account of the history of South African township music from the *marabi* styles of the 1930s through to the *kwaito* house music and hip-hop-inspired *pantsula* of the present day is both erudite and entertaining, while sharply framing the music against the political background of apartheid and how popular song served as both escapist release and a cultural tool of resistance.

10 Clandestino
Peter Culshaw
(Serpent's Tail, 2013)

There can surely be no figure in global music more enigmatic and mercurial than Manu Chao. Peter Culshaw's book has all the muscle of a mystery story – part-biography, part-travelogue and part-fable as he spent five years tracking down his elusive hero in remote locations around the world. Along the way some of the adventures are hair-raising but they're recounted with a warmth and wit that are irresistible.

BRITISH UNDERGROUND AT FOLK ALLIANCE 2024

WESTIN HOTEL KANSAS CITY

21ST TO 24TH FEBRUARY, 10 PM TIL LATE

MAIN STAGE RM 539, UNPLUGGED STAGE RM 544

BRITISH UNDERGROUND

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

tdp Talent Development Partner
PRS Foundation

sounds just fine

SONA JOBARTEH

2024 TOUR DATES

FEBRUARY

2 Weimar,
Deutsches National Theatre, Germany
3 Koln, Philharmonie, Germany
4 Luxembourg, Grand Auditorium
22 Santa Barbara, CA Campbell Hall, USA
23 Los Angeles,
CA Luckman Fine Arts Complex USA
24 San Luis Obispo, CA
Performing Arts Center USA
25 Palm Springs, Art Museum USA
26 Mesa, AZ, Ikeda Theater USA
27 Tucson, AZ, Fox Tucson Theater USA
28 Albuquerque, Dirty Bourbon USA*

MARCH

1 Santa Fe, NM,
Lensic Performing Arts Center USA
2 Colorado Springs, CO,
Pikes Peak Center USA
3 Denver, CO, USA
Paramount Theater USA
4 Montreal, Le National Canada*
6 Portsmouth, NH,
The Historic Theater USA
7 Albany, NY,
Hart Theatre at the Egg USA
9 Toronto, Koerner Hall Canada
10 Ottawa, National Arts Center Canada
11 London, Barbican Hall UK
12 Bristol, St George's Hall UK
30 Boston, Somerville Theatre USA*

mintaka music
www.mintakamusic.com
sonajobarteh.com

THE NEW ALBUM *Badinyaa Kumoo*

The above USA and Canada performances only, are Co-Bills with legendary guitarist **Taj Mahal** *except those marked* * *which are Sona Jobarteh Band shows, as are the performances in Europe*